Problems of Ideology

by
Liam John Nehrmann
BA (Hons)
School of Humanities

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
University of Tasmania February 2017

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr Leila Toiviainen for her continuous support over the course of writing this thesis. Her guidance, motivation and wealth of knowledge were indispensable and I could not have asked for a better mentor.

I would like to thank Associate Professor Kim Atkins and Tim Jarvis for reviewing sections of the thesis and offering insightful suggestions and corrections, the work is better for it. I would also like to thank Tim for involving me in his reading groups on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Philosophy of Right*, and Marx's *Early Writings*, the discussions we had were very rewarding and helped in the construction of the thesis.

I would also like to thank Dr Stephen Buckle for his suggestions on good secondary literature related to Marx, Dr Ingo Farin for advising me on the relevance of Foucault and Professor Dirk Baltzly for his help with the philosophies of ancient Stoicism and skepticism. I am also grateful to Dr David Coady for giving me the opportunity to work as a tutor during my candidature, and guiding me along the way; thanks also to Dr Richard Corry for the further work opportunities.

Lastly, I would like to extend my gratitude to my friends and family for always being there for me, and for the love and support of Paola Bärlund, without whom I would not have been able to complete this work.

Abstract

This thesis serves as a critical account of the development of the theory of ideology; the aim is to contribute towards the rehabilitation of this theory, demonstrating that with certain refinements it remains of significant importance to contemporary social analysis. I argue that the principal flaws in the traditional theory of ideology associated with Marx are rooted in its own adoption of certain 'ideological' motifs from the philosophy of Hegel and of Feuerbach; in particular, a teleological conception of historical process and an idealised image of authenticity. These presuppositions will be shown to result in three problematic implications for the theory: the apparent need for a standard of truth from which to juxtapose ideological errors; the introduction of a dichotomy between an 'ideological' and an 'authentic' subject, and with it concurrent issues surrounding the nature of human agency; and the need to posit some sort of collective subject that is mystified or falsely represented in ideology. I argue that these problems can be surmounted using the aesthetic and psychoanalytic approaches to ideology, developed by Eagleton and Žižek in their respective adaptations of Althusser's conception of interpellation. This shift entails a reformulation of ideology as being an affective rather than a cognitive phenomenon, and so is removed from the problem of true and false belief. The distinction between 'ideological' and 'non-ideological' subjects is also challenged, and this entails a much more expansive conception of ideology, albeit one that is also more variable. The indeterminate notion of a collective subject embodied in ideological formations is explicated as being analogous to the modes of 'intersubjectivity' formed through aesthetic experience, and further developed using the psychoanalytic idea of fantasy. Finally, I argue that the conception of power implicit in the Marxian theory of ideology, epitomised in the struggle/repression opposition, should be replaced with the relational conception of power advanced by Foucault; that in this way the theory is able to account for ideology in all of its forms, and is not limited by any instances of economic reductionism or class essentialism. The application of this refined approach to three distinct and contrastive cases of ideological formations (Early Christianity, the contemporary European Far Right and the New Age Movement) is undertaken in order to demonstrate the enduring relevance and importance of the critique of ideology.

Contents

Introduction

The term ideology is commonly used in contemporary discourse, yet despite this the meaning of the term is not fixed. A cursory reflection on the varied contexts in which the term is deployed shows that its intended meaning can differ widely. On the one hand, when we suggest that someone is 'ideologically motivated', it could simply and rather innocuously be inferred that such a person is inclined towards a particular set of social and/or political beliefs and practices; on the other hand, it could be implied to mean that the person is 'brainwashed' or 'radicalised', manipulated to the extent that they are no longer capable of acting as 'themselves'. This range of meaning introduces a problem of the relation between ideological identification and human agency, of identifying where the two can be said to begin and end. Of course, if a distinction such as this is to be made, the problematic relation between 'ideology' and 'knowledge', or ideology and some sort of authenticity must likewise be determined and there is always the obvious danger that any such distinction is itself ideologically motivated. The apparent elasticity of the concept, and its potentially all-encompassing nature, have contributed towards its relative disfavour in philosophical circles today. Nevertheless, I wish to argue that the notion of ideology is invaluable for social analysis; that the problems to which the traditional theory of ideology addressed itself are real and enduring; and that, given certain refinements, such a theory is capable of clearly explicating the nature of ideology and its various effects.

I will argue that the key problems with a theory of ideology are rooted in certain presuppositions that Marx adopted when developing the concept. For this reason the

thesis begins with an account of the philosophical progenitors of the idea. Chapter 1 argues that the foundation for Marx's theory of ideology can be found in aspects of Hegel's conception of the phenomenological development of self-consciousness, in particular, its emphasis on the role of alienation in this development, in the form of both estrangement and externalisation. Within this schema, the nature of a given social organisation is fundamental in determining whether self-consciousness is perceived to be estranged from itself (and therefore prone to ideological (mis)identification) or rather, confirmed in its existence by perceiving in such an organisation aspects of itself in objectified form. It is a schema that assumes, quite rightly, that self-consciousness can only ever develop in a state of interdependence with others. What is more problematic is the assumption that some form of authentic reconciliation is possible, with the notion that self-consciousness is a finite manifestation of some form of collective subject. It will be argued that the indeterminate nature of this collective subject has been an enduring problem in the development of a theory of ideology. The idea that ideology is a misrepresentation of something *authentic* will be shown to have developed from the relation between the individual and *objective spirit* in Hegel, to *species being* in Feuerbach, and to *collective social labour* in Marx; in each case ideology can be construed as a phenomenon whereby the individual is in some sense estranged from this more natural mode of being. Following the 'aesthetic turn' outlined in Chapter 5, I will argue that ideology does *not* function as a barrier to a form of authenticity; but rather, that it is in the notion of authenticity itself, and the various ways in which it is conceived, that ideology can be found.

In Feuerbach, this theme of alienation and reconciliation is developed further in line with what becomes a theory of ideology in Marx. Here self-consciousness is conceived as being a divided subject, insofar as it is able to perceive itself in an individual and limited sense, as well as being able perceive itself in terms of its general mode of being (or 'species being'). Feuerbach argues that religion can be understood as an externalised representation (or mystification) of this latter mode of being; I will argue that this is the basis for identifying ideology with some form of 'false consciousness'. I argue that, once this association is made, immediate difficulties arise in specifying the precise nature of what is to be juxtaposed with ideology. Marx inherits this problematic relation between ideology and false consciousness. In Chapter 2 I outline the theory of ideology as it develops in his works, and further demonstrate the ways in which it is influenced by Hegel and Feuerbach. I argue that these influences are responsible for introducing an ambiguity in Marx, as to whether ideology should be conceived in an epistemological or a political (functional) sense. Both approaches are clearly discernible in Marx, and I will argue that, if the consequences of each are to be accepted, the result is a counter-intuitive conception of ideology that is both the expression of the interests of a dominant class and the form in which these interests are mystified. This alternating function leads to difficulties in determining what can be said to be causally responsible for the formation of dominant ideologies; and I will argue that the division between base and superstructure in Marx does not sufficiently resolve this problem.

Despite these difficulties there is much to be valued in Marx's theory of ideology. Its emphasis on the role of non-rational belief in the unity of culture, on the contingent

relation between certain mental conceptions and material conditions, and on the malleable role that a sense of alienation can play in the structures of social organisation, are all features that are worthy of further examination. Taking this into account, the purpose of Chapters 3 and 4 is to isolate the 'ideological' presuppositions informing Marx's theory of ideology, in order to more clearly evaluate the problems to which the theory addresses. In Chapter 3 I will demonstrate that there is what can be termed a 'motif of transformation' underlying the work of Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx on ideology. In each case there is an assumption that historical process can be understood in a progressive or even a teleological sense and, connectedly, that self-consciousness or human nature develops from a state of alienation, through various forms of ideological identification, towards a state of authenticity as yet unreached. It is a motif, then, that introduces both a dichotomy between an ideological and an authentic subject, and a need to posit a collective subject embodied in the historical process. I will argue that the effect of this invariably amounts to an untenable division between ideological and non-ideological conceptions. Chapter 4 examines the cultural landscape of the period between 1789 and 1848 in Europe, highlighting the dominance of certain ideas that were supportive of the motif of transformation. It will be argued that it is plausible to assume that the theoretical transformations described in the motif could have been perceived to be consistent with, or substantiated by, the material transformations taking place at the time. This argument is supported by the work of Rosen on the influence of the philosophical traditions of rationalism and providentialism on Western cultural assumptions in general, and the theory of ideology in particular. In the refined approach to a theory of ideology, outlined in Chapters 5 and 6, I will argue that every ideological formation contains a *semblance* of some form of providential reconciliation and/or authenticity; however, it does not

follow that this *semblance* should be read as an inverted or mystified representation of something *concrete*. Insofar as the traditional theory of ideology assumes this, I will argue that it is vulnerable to the same critique it presents us with.

The advantage of incorporating aspects of aesthetic and psychoanalytic theory into that of ideology is that it dramatically realigns the conceptual framework of the traditional theory. The nature of a collective subject, for instance, is no longer conceived to be something that is internal or inherent to a social body, but rather a manifestation of communal feeling based upon a collective act of *differentiation* from something posited as *other* or external to the group; and in place of authentic or inauthentic representation, ideology is now conceived in the manner of aesthetic 'intersubjectivity', and this will be shown to dissociate the theory from the problem of knowledge. In Chapter 5 I outline this conceptual realignment. The basis is to be found in Althusser's conception of interpellation, and it will be argued that the development of this conception in the works of Eagleton and Žižek signifies an important breakthrough in the theory of ideology. This refined approach will be shown to dissolve the conceptual opposition between 'ideological' and 'non-ideological' subjects, and consequently to entail a conception of ideology that is in a certain sense ubiquitous, albeit one that is also highly variable. I will argue that such a conception does not devolve into a form of relativism and is still compatible with a value-based critique of different ideological formations, the various possible functional roles of an ideological figure of the 'Other' will be shown to be a decisive aspect of such a critique. The nature of 'ideological consciousness', or the way in which the individual subject experiences ideology, will be shown to be explicable using methods of aesthetic and psychoanalytic theory; however, there remain some

difficulties in explaining the function of ideology on a broader, societal level. I will argue that these difficulties arise from the conception of power that is implicit in the traditional theory of ideology, that it is in regard to this conception that opponents of the theory can claim that it is reductive. In Chapter 6 I will argue that, within the context of the *relational* conception of power advanced by Foucault, the refined theory of ideology is not limited by such difficulties and capable of accounting for the functions of ideology in all of its forms.

I will argue that, applied in this way, ideology can be conceived as a supplement to more general forms of discourse. It will be shown to be a unique form of discourse, for whereas discourse generally tends towards constant evolution and adaptation in the forms of exercising power, ideology utilises a semblance of stabilisation and constancy in order to exert itself. Consequently, it will be shown that ideological discourse is most active in the instances of a breakdown in hegemonic power, in situations where it is able to have the effect of an ostensible equilibrium in an otherwise volatile environment. It will be shown to follow that ideology can be read as being both one of the most potent *and* one of the most vulnerable forms of discourse. Its potency lies in its appeal to the aesthetic and psychological dispositions of individuals, for instance in the promise of some form of social harmony and stability. It will be argued, however, that such an effect is only possible insofar as ideology eschews from any radical transformations dictated by the dynamic and ever-shifting relations of power that are expressed in apparatuses of knowledge, or discourse in general. In order to sustain itself, ideological discourse must make constant use of the mechanisms of transference and displacement that are outlined in Chapter 5. I will argue that it is from the numerous and divergent effects of such

mechanisms that a coherent ‘critique’ of ideology is still possible. In order to demonstrate the enduring relevance and effectiveness of a theory of ideology, the thesis concludes with the application of this refined approach to the analysis of three distinct cases of ideological formations; what will emerge is a conception of ideology that is still connected, but no longer reducible, to the political economy of the traditional Marxian theory.

1 The Metaphysical Foundation for a Theory of Ideology

1.1 Preliminaries

"In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here it is a matter of ascending from earth to heaven… It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness" (Marx & Engels 1976, p. 42).

Deprived of its context, the above quotation illustrates one of the central problems for a theory of ideology, namely the relation of consciousness to the external world. Taken in its pejorative form, the term 'ideology' often connotes a set of mystifying beliefs that falsely represent reality *as it is*, independent of any conceptual distortions we may interpose between it.[1] An accusation of ideological thinking would thus imply the possibility of ascertaining an undistorted perspective of the external world from which to cast the judgment, and the improbability of being able to attain some such 'god's eye view' has haunted the epistemic approach to the concept of ideology since its inception. This problem relates to the conception of ideology as being intimately connected with a state of 'false consciousness', an inability to accurately perceive one's own situation within a set of social relations, particularly with regards to forms of exploitation: "…[false consciousness] characterizes the generic and chronic kind of servitude that cannot even perceive its own situation. It may therefore coexist with a kind of illusory contentment" (Blackburn 2008). This 'illusory contentment', then, would be a function of ideology. The term 'false consciousness' originates in the late

[1] It will be shown that, traditionally, forms of cognitive misperception, or alienation, have also been implicit in the broader conception of ideology as a social or political construct. For instance, in the notion that ideologies function to both obscure and mollify relations of domination through the misrepresentation of a given social order. This aspect will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 2.

work Engels and is absent in the works of Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx; however, I endeavour to show that aspects of their work represent a clear development towards this conception in rudimentary form. The concept of alienation is integral here, as the ideological subject of false consciousness would necessarily be alienated from his or her dormant potentialities, and it would follow that the goal of a 'critique of ideology' would be to enlighten the subject of ideology as to their real condition in order for them to live in a more authentic relation to their social environment. This chapter sketches the development of this inter-connected theme of alienation and forms of 'false consciousness' in the work of Hegel and Feuerbach, and the way in which this culminates in a theory of ideology in Marx. Later I will suggest that, contrary to the idea that ideology represents a barrier to a form of authenticity, it may rather be the case that the very notion of authenticity underpinning Marx's theory of ideology, what is traditionally juxtaposed to ideology, is itself ideological.

The notion of ideology being a form of false consciousness can be situated within the broader tradition of attempting to overcome the metaphysical problem of the relation between mind and matter. Arguably one of the most thoroughgoing attempts at achieving this, breaching the gulf between subject and object and thus negating the spectre of ideology, was undertaken in the philosophy of Hegel. It is ironic, then, that the modern concept of ideology can be seen as having arisen from the critique of speculative philosophy in general, usually with Hegel decried as the latter's champion. It should be noted outright, however, and it will be argued in the proceeding chapters, that to identify Hegel and Marx as being representative of idealism and materialism respectively is too simplistic. Hegel took care to argue that, just as particulars cannot be properly understood without reference to universals, so

too are universal concepts unintelligible unless they correspond to material particulars: "…Hegel also rejects a reductionism operating in…dogmatic metaphysics [;] …he denies that the world of appearances is ever *mere* appearance… 'Reality' cannot be cut off from the forms in which it 'appears'" (Norman 1976, p. 42). Marx's insistence on the social aspects of the development of consciousness also distinguishes him from the more empiricist-minded school of materialism, indeed it is arguable that he did not see himself as a materialist at all: "…Marx sometimes preferred to say that he was *not* a materialist, but a naturalist or humanist, and that 'consistent naturalism or humanism distinguishes itself both from idealism and materialism, constituting at the same time the unifying truth of both'" (Williamson 2008, p. 127). Despite the fact that both thinkers minimise the ramifications of the mind/body problem by attempting to dissolve the apparent dichotomy between idealism and materialism, Hegel and Marx's emphasis on the decisive role of consciousness and material activity respectively, testifies to the enduring nature of such divisions. With regard to the topic at hand, a break from this apparent deadlock (of whether consciousness determines material activity, or vice versa) will serve as the foundation for a theory of ideology, at least in its broadest sense.

In tracing the thought of Hegel through to Marx, by way of Feuerbach, special attention will be paid to the evolving conception of the nature of *alienation* in their works. Whether it is alienation from the material world, from the self, from others or from society in general, alienation will be shown to be a persistent though malleable feature implicit in almost all conceptions of ideology up to the present. For the present I will demonstrate the development of this concept of alienation, and show how its critique and reformulation by Marx gives rise to what can tentatively be assumed to

be one of the fundamental problems of ideology: the extent to which knowledge is socially conditioned.

1.2 The Interdependence of Self-Consciousness: Alienation in Hegel

Immediate difficulties arise in the interpretation of Hegel if one attempts to abstract certain of his ideas without reference to his philosophical system as a whole. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* endeavours to chart the development of consciousness from its most rudimentary forms towards its culmination in 'Absolute Knowing'; as such, the errors of consciousness encountered along the way (i.e. the emergence of incomplete or prejudicial perspectives) are never dismissed out of hand as false, they are rather seen as necessary stages of this development whose identification and sublimation are essential in order to transition to a more comprehensive level of knowledge. Central here is Hegel's notion of the 'determinate negation', whereby the positive element of an error is preserved in its negation; this is well illustrated in Hegel's employment of the tripartite movement of thesis, antithesis and synthesis: the synthesis is inextricably linked to the thesis, and by extension truth can be said to be inextricably linked to error.[2] To give an example, one may begin with a conception of free self-consciousness that includes the unperturbed expression of our natural desires and inclinations; it may then follow that this conception is contradicted by the

[2] The claim that Hegel makes use of a tripartite dialectic has been disputed by Kaufmann, who argues that such a reading is inconsistent with Hegel's works: "What do we find if not a usable dialectical method? We find a vision of the world, of man, and of history which emphasizes development through conflict, the moving power of human passions, which produce wholly unintended results, and the irony of sudden reversals. If that be called a dialectical world view, then Hegel's philosophy *was* dialectical… But the fateful myth that this perspective is reducible to a rigorous method that even permits predictions deserves no quarter, though by now half the world believes it" (1966, pp. 174-175). Kaufmann makes a strong case; yet even by his reading the genesis of the movement, even if it be in error, is still inextricably linked to the result; and so for the purposes here his argument is unproblematic.

demands of our rational will, which requires the occasional negation of these drives. This contradiction, however, does not entail a doing-away with our initial conception of free self-consciousness in favour of something that is other or externally given; rather our recognition of the antithesis and its proper relation to us retroactively alters our understanding of the initial premise, and this dialectical movement continues indefinitely. There is a certain affinity between this process and the interpretation of *Bildung* that Gadamer develops in *Truth and Method*. *Bildung* here differs from something like 'cultivation' in that it is not simply a means to an end, in the sense that we cultivate our latent talents and capacities. Rather it is defined as a continual self-formation through the recognition and subsequent assimilation of the alien as our own, the very process of which being an end in itself (a sort of 'being-in-becoming'):

> To recognize one's own in the alien, to become at home in it, is the basic movement of spirit, whose being consists only in returning to itself from what is other. Hence all theoretical Bildung, even acquiring foreign languages and conceptual worlds, is merely the continuation of a process of Bildung that begins much earlier. Every single individual who raises himself out of his natural being to the spiritual finds in the language, customs, and institutions of his people a pre-given body of material which, as in learning to speak, he has to make his own. Thus every individual is always engaged in the process of Bildung and in getting beyond his naturalness, inasmuch as the world into which he is growing is one that is humanly constituted through language and custom (Gadamer 2013, p. 13).

This notion of *Bildung* as a process of determinate negation permeates the philosophy of Hegel, and such a process is considered to be essential in order for the higher development of a consciousness that is in mediation with itself as objective spirit:

> It is therefore through culture [*Bildung*, in the original German] that the individual acquires standing and actuality. His true *original nature* and substance is the

> alienation of himself as Spirit from his *natural* being… This individuality *moulds* itself by culture [*Bildung*] into what it intrinsically is… Although here the self knows itself as *this* self, yet its actuality consists solely in the setting-aside of its natural self (Hegel 1977, p. 298).

Thus Hegel's philosophy can be read as a rigorous call to go beyond or 'estrange' oneself from the 'naturalness' of initial impressions, to attempt to situate oneself in apparent points of opposition; only in this way can any inadequacy of our knowledge be ascertained and transcended to more adequate forms. This of course implies the critical challenging of accepted beliefs – a disposition which will later be shown to be quite antithetical to that of ideology. Nevertheless, I wish to argue that it is in Hegel's considerations on self-consciousness in an early, unreflective and estranged state of development that the foundations for Marx's theory of ideology can be found; and so although the scope of this study does not allow for a comprehensive analysis of Hegel's *Phenomenology* in its entirety, it is hoped that a critical reading of the section on self-consciousness can be justified, not as a critique of the internal consistency of Hegel's thought, but as a progenitor to the problem of alienation as it has developed in relation to the concept of ideology.

Hegel begins his treatment of self-consciousness with a stage of development designated as 'self-certainty'. What is essential about this aspect of consciousness is that its nature is derived purely from the inner workings of the subject, and this gives rise to a strictly dualistic perception of reality. There is an I, the existence and truth of which I can be certain, and then there is the external world I encounter, a not-I that seems to stand above and beyond me. Moreover, these external objects are perceived negatively from the standpoint of self-certainty, insofar as one's certainty of self grows in proportion to the extent that it establishes itself in opposition to or at least

differentiated from something other; however, this entails that one's independence is *dependent* on something outside the self, thus the situation is one in which self-certainty is simultaneously developed and undermined. This antagonistic relationship between subject and object engenders a striving for unity, wherein consciousness can be made to feel at home in the world in which it finds itself; where it can effectively perceive *its* world, not *this* or *that* world. This state of affairs leads Hegel to associate this stage of self-consciousness with 'Desire':

> …self-consciousness is *Desire* in general. Consciousness, as self-consciousness, henceforth has a double object: one is the immediate object, that of sense-certainty and perception, which however *for self-consciousness* has the character of a *negative*; and the second, viz. *itself*, which is the true *essence*, and is present in the first instance only as opposed to the first object. In this sphere, self-consciousness exhibits itself as the movement in which this antithesis is removed, and the identity of itself with itself becomes explicit for it (Hegel 1977, p. 105).

Consciousness, as understood as *self*-consciousness, implies a certain level of autonomy in that it is perceived to be *sui generis*; yet self-consciousness finds itself manifested in a corporeal form thoroughly dependent on an alien, external world for its continued existence, it is not self-generative. 'Desire', in this sense, denotes a conscious longing to take ownership of the external object and thus situate the primacy of existence within the self, to identify 'itself with itself'. The initial response to this emergence of desire is to attempt to abolish the external object (to destroy or consume the object would obviously be the extreme variant of this impulse; it could also be argued that any will to control or manipulate the object is of the same category of desire). In so doing, the external object can be characterised as being essentially *for consciousness*, its inner characteristics negated in its new role as simple matter for an

autonomous self-consciousness, now objectively defined as an 'abolishing agent'. However, this sense of autonomy will quickly be shown to be illusory:

> In this satisfaction [of abolishment], however, experience makes it aware that the object has its own independence…in order that this supersession [of the object] can take place, there must be this other. Thus self-consciousness, by its negative relation to the object, is unable to supersede it; it is really because of that relation that it produces the object again, and the desire as well (Hegel 1977, p. 109).

In negating the object, self-consciousness will simultaneously negate its autonomy as an agent of negation. With each external negation self-consciousness loses the focal point from which it derives its essence;[3] thus each negation necessarily engenders a new relation of subject to object, and the inability to surmount this predicament once again shifts the primacy of existence away from the subject and situates it in the external world. This whole process is closely related to Hegel's use of the term 'Aufheben', often translated insufficiently in English as 'sublimation':

> *Aufheben* (sublimate) means literally 'pick up'… But this original sensuous meaning has given rise to two derivative meanings… 'cancel,' and 'preserve' or 'keep'. Something may be picked up in order that it will no longer be there; on the other hand, I may also pick it up to keep it. When Hegel uses the term… [he means] how something is picked up in order that it may no longer be *there* just the way it was, although, of course, it is not cancelled altogether but lifted up to be kept on a different level (Kaufmann 1966, p. 159).

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[3] 'Essence' can here be understood in its traditional sense as being "…the basic or primary element in the being of a thing" (Blackburn 2008); it is the element of a thing which could not be taken away from it without negating the thing itself. For Hegel, the inability of self-consciousness to isolate this aspect of itself is a result of the fact that essence actually entails both identity and difference: self-differentiation. As such, essence is always manifested in a relation to something else; thus it cannot be grounded in a way that it would be the same in all circumstances, and is neither timeless nor immutable: "…Essence we have understood as the inner necessity which first posits one property, then cancels it in favour of another, and then still another, and so on. Hence, in Hegelian terms, the underlying identity is the difference, the self-differentiation, that which deploys the different properties in their necessary relation to each other" (Taylor 2005, p. 261).

The abolishing agent is limited to an act of cancellation, lacking the aspect of preservation required for Hegelian sublimation. What is needed, it follows, is for the negation to come from *without*, from within the external object itself. Only if the *otherness* of the external can be negated in perpetuity can the autonomy of self-consciousness, so defined, be maintained: "Man, as a being who depends on external reality, can only come to integrity if he discovers a reality which could undergo a standing negation, whose otherness could be negated without its being abolished" (Taylor 2005, p. 152). This standing negation, Hegel argues, can only be effected through the recognition and subordination of *another* self-consciousness: "*Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness"* (Hegel 1977, p. 110). The evolution of this standing negation will be examined in the context of Hegel's master/slave dialectic in the following section.

The necessary dependence on another self-consciousness for self-consciousness' development is an interesting feature in Hegel. Following Descartes it was commonly held that the primacy of the existence of the self was the foundation for knowing anything with a degree of certainty, a position which invariably leads to a solipsistic scepticism regarding the external world, given perception's propensity for distortion. In Hegel this position is reversed. What consciousness is essentially confronted with is not self-certainty but alienation from an external world, its apparent dependence on which relegating it to the function of being an *extension* of such a world, and thus *inessential*. The movement towards recognition from another self-consciousness is thus an attempt to regain essentiality. It can be argued that this very problem of alienation from an external world necessarily presupposes the existence of a self, and this is true. However, what Hegel argues is that, without being able to conceptualise

oneself in an objective way, this sense of self is without sufficient content; and the ability to conceptualise oneself objectively requires the recognition of another consciousness. In order to show the force of this somewhat ambiguous claim, Richard Norman proposed a thought experiment that is worth quoting at length:

> …let us imagine a human being who has always lived in complete isolation and is unaware of the existence of other human beings… Begging certain questions about it, let us suppose that this being is able to act on the world in various ways, to gather plants and perhaps kill other animals for food, to use foliage and timber and stones to provide himself with shelter, and so on. Such a being might be regarded as conscious of himself in the minimal sense that he is aware of the world as existing for him and in opposition to him, as resisting him and requiring him to act on it. But he could not be aware of himself as an object in the world, in the way in which the plants and animals he feeds on, and the materials he uses, are objects in the world. He could not be aware of himself in this way because he could not be aware of himself as an object of possible awareness for other human beings (1976, p. 47).

The attainment of recognition from another self-consciousness is of course something that falls outside the performative capacity of the desiring self-consciousness; it must be given to it. A resultant state of mutual recognition does not, however, arise spontaneously from this situation, it cannot as this "…is at a stage when men have not recognized themselves as universal, for to have done so is to see that recognition for me, for what I am, is recognition of man as such and therefore something that in principle should be extended to all" (Taylor 2005, p. 153). It follows that the need for recognition without acknowledging its reciprocal nature leads to conflict, as one self-consciousness attempts to wrest its essentiality from another. Hegel, in the well-known section on the master/slave relation, depicts this process.

1.3 The Master/Slave Dialectic

Self-consciousness is by nature difficult to grasp: it is both a subject embodied in corporeal form and consciousness of this embodiment. The contingency of its physical form, its state of dependency on the external, has been made apparent to itself; and so autonomy is now sought by negating its physicality and finding refuge in itself as transcendental consciousness:

> The presentation of itself…as the pure abstraction of self-consciousness consists in showing itself as the pure negation of its objective mode, or in showing that it is not attached to any specific *existence*, not to the individuality common to existence as such, that it is not attached to life (Hegel 1977, p. 113).

The apparent essentiality of the transcendental aspects of self-consciousness is given greater credence the more one displays a disregard for their corporeal embodiment, or indeed a disregard for corporeal embodiment as such; in the framework of recognition between self-consciousnesses this negation of objective particularity entails risking one's life in a conflict with another. Through a life and death struggle self-consciousness attempts to win recognition of itself as a pure being-for-self, transcendent of its physical embodiment, of which it is willing to sacrifice for the cause. Such a conflict, however, would invariably lead to the death of one or both of the combatants, and this outcome would lead us back to the situation of self-consciousness defined as an abolishing agent: with no possible recognition to be obtained from a now deceased self-consciousness, the process would be destined to repeat itself ad infinitum. Thus what is needed is for one self-consciousness to submit itself to the other, in doing so its *otherness* would be negated, subsumed into the being of the victorious consciousness with the new status of *thinghood*; and so the

victorious self-consciousness' essential relation to external life would be acknowledged whilst its autonomy remains intact, "…through this there is posited a pure self-consciousness, and a consciousness which is not purely for itself but for another, i.e. is a merely *immediate* consciousness, or consciousness in the form of *thinghood*…The former is lord, the other is bondsman" (Hegel 1977, p. 115). Thus enslavement is depicted as the next stage in the development towards the overcoming of alienation in Hegel. However, the master/slave relation will be shown to be more complicated than it at first appears.

On the surface the master has overcome the apparent dichotomy between selfhood and material reality. The master represents pure being-for-self, insofar as it assumes itself to have taken control of its external environment through the mediation of the slave; material reality is no longer perceived as standing opposed and in resistance to it, but ready for its consumption. The slave fills the gap between subject and object, and the master's ownership of the slave negates its foreignness. However, a cursory examination proves this to be illusory. Precisely because of the relation between master and slave, wherein the slave is construed as a dependent being, a being-for-other, there can be no authentic recognition of the master's being-for-self, and this engenders an unexpected reversal:

> In this recognition the unessential consciousness is for the lord the object, which constitutes the *truth* of his certainty of himself. But it is clear that this object does not correspond to its Notion, but rather that the object in which the lord has achieved his lordship has in reality turned out to be something quite different from an independent consciousness…He is, therefore, not certain of *being-for-self* as the truth of himself. On the contrary, his truth is in reality the unessential consciousness and its

> unessential action…The *truth* of the independent consciousness is accordingly the servile consciousness of the bondsman (Hegel 1977, pp. 116-117).

Given the position of subordination imposed upon the slave it seems counterintuitive to assert that the truth of independent consciousness is to be found here, yet it must be remembered that we are still dealing with self-consciousness in its early development, so neither slave nor master can be properly representative of authenticity. What Hegel argues is that, while the master withdraws into a reverie of self-involution by superficially separating itself from the problem of estrangement, *implicit* in the slave's predicament are the pre-conditions for the development of an authentically independent self-consciousness.

There are a number of reasons for locating the pre-conditions for authentic development in the position of the slave. Firstly, in the recognition of the master the slave has developed an idealised picture of being-for-self. In actuality the master does not represent such a being, as shown above, but the space for the conceptualisation of being-for-self is opened up for the slave in the act of recognition. The master has no such point of reference, in relegating the slave to the function of *things* its environment remains for it on the sub-human level, and so for it the status of being-for-self remains ineffable; not only has the master failed to actualise being-for-self, it is further unable to authentically conceptualise such a state. The next important feature of enslavement is the slave's confrontation with the fear of death, "For this consciousness has been fearful, not of this or that particular thing or just at odd moments, but its whole being has been seized with dread; for it has experienced the fear of death, the absolute Lord…and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations" (Hegel 1977, p. 117). Hegel regards the fear of death as being an

important stimulus for shaking oneself loose from an over-identification with individual particulars; in confronting the transitoriness of an individual existence the slave is forced seek truth outside of the self. Thus there is a shift of perspective in which an attempt is now made to identify those aspects of self-consciousness that could be perceived to be common to all, in a sense *universal*, and so unencumbered by the finite nature of the consciousnesses in which they manifest. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, is the function of *disciplined work*. In work the slave is confronted with the resistance of an independent material reality that is shaped and transformed in conformity with the slave's inclination. This form of self-expression allows Hegel to delineate the notion of alienation into both positive and negative forms: self-externalisation as a response to self-estrangement.

Hegel's multi-faceted approach to the notion of alienation has been concisely articulated by Gavin Rae:

> … 'alienation' translates two German words: 'Entfremdung' and 'Entäusserung'… 'Entfremdung' describes a process or state where consciousness is separated from, at least, one of the aspects that are required for consciousness to fully understand itself. In contrast, 'Entäusserung' describes the process whereby consciousness externalises itself in object form and, through this objectification, develops a better understanding of itself. To clarify… 'Entfremdung' will be translated as 'estrangement', and 'Entäusserung' will be translated as 'externalisation' (Rae 2012, p. 31).

Thus far alienation as estrangement has been the predominant problem for self-consciousness, its attempts at abolishment and enslavement can be read as failed efforts in negating this attitude by actualising the more positive form of alienation as externalisation. Up until this stage externalisation has been sought in the self-objectification that comes with authentic recognition between subjects, but in the

process of work a new means of self-externalisation can be achieved from within the external world itself. In the project of fashioning and transforming material objects the worker imprints certain ideas onto the world, and is thus met with a reflection of the self in the finished product. The enduring nature of the product can then function as the aforementioned 'standing negation' of the *otherness* of the external world, the worker can now see aspects of the self in the external world, is thus 'at home' in its surroundings, and Hegel would argue that this engenders a profound transformation in the development of self-consciousness: "…in transforming things we change ourselves. By creating a standing reflection of ourselves as universal beings we become such beings" (Taylor 2005, p. 156). This positive form of alienation as externalisation is implicit in the slave's situation; however, it remains thoroughly incomplete. As a mediator between master and material reality the work of the slave is never that of an autonomous agent, and thus *self*-externalisation cannot be achieved.

The master/slave relation has been shown to be non-conducive to the fulfilment of authentic self-consciousness, but from this relation the necessary criteria for such a development can be drawn. An authentic self-consciousness requires freedom, as the subject must be able to perceive itself as an autonomous agent. Yet freedom has been shown to require recognition, that is, the subject needs to be objectively recognised as an autonomous agent in order to confirm its independence. Disciplined work is necessary in order to overcome the sense of estrangement from the external world, because, in working on the world the worker is integrated into his/her surroundings (the 'discipline' here referring to the work's conformity with a rational plan, unlike the arbitrary 'work' of the 'abolishing agent'). Lastly, the fear of death is necessary

for the avoidance of simple self-identification; the realisation that one is a finite manifestation *of* consciousness reveals the universal nature of consciousness *as such*. Both master and slave exhibit only some of these attributes, and still only in incomplete forms. The master has freedom and recognition, but this is only partial recognition as it comes from the objectified slave, and therefore it is only partial freedom. The slave has experienced the fear of death and works on the world, but this work is the master's bidding and so falls short of self-externalisation. What is needed is a situation in which all these attributes can be unified in a single consciousness:

> Recognition, freedom, work and discipline are, then, features of human experience which are necessary for the achievement of a full self-consciousness. To be properly and universally realised, they require the existence of a free society in which everyone is recognised as a person, and in which all men work freely, serving not the needs of an individual master but the needs of the whole community, and subject only to the discipline of reason (Norman 1976, p. 54).

The implications of this are significant. Hegel has argued that the development of self-consciousness cannot be accomplished in isolation, that there are certain criteria necessary for this development and that these criteria can only be fulfilled within an ideal state, a society that reflects the nature of its various constituents in an organic whole. The emergence of such a state would thus do away with the dualistic barriers encountered so far: independence versus dependence, the finite versus the infinite, and estrangement versus externalisation. With such conditions Hegel argues that a sense of unity is possible between self-consciousness and *Spirit* or *Geist*, and in this way the essence of the former can be grasped in its relation to the latter; the description of this experience again recalls that of Gadamer's interpretation of *Bildung*, being the movement of self-formation through the recognition and subsequent assimilation of the alien as one's own:

> What still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what Spirit is – this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: 'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I' (Hegel 1977, p. 110).

A troubling conclusion arises here: it seems to follow that self-consciousness, in its authentic sense, can only arise as the *outcome* of an ideal state – as a harmonious mediation between individuals and society is the only foundation for the prerequisite conditions detailed above. It is difficult not to infer, then, that there may be something 'inauthentic' about the nature of self-consciousness prior to this sort of reconciliation.

Returning to the problem of ideology as false consciousness (i.e. ideology as the inability to perceive the actual relations between people and their social environment), it follows that for Hegel all valuations, explanations and beliefs held by individuals *prior* to the establishment of an ideal state could be said to be in some sense ideological. This position can of course be evaded with the addendum that, for the speculative philosopher who comes to see all historical manifestations of individual and collective consciousnesses as progressing necessarily towards this ideal state, ideology is avoided; for it could be argued that it is enough to comprehend the direction of the movement of consciousness in order to infer its destination. Nevertheless, the implication that ideology would have to be so pervasive, given its rather negative connotation of false consciousness, is a disconcerting consequence; it would certainly appear that this concept is in need of some clarification. 'Ideology' as such is not something that Hegel deals with directly; however, in his treatment of alienated minds striving for *truth* in unity, the germinations for such a theory can be discerned. Before investigating how the notion of ideology is further developed by Feuerbach and Marx it will be worth undertaking a brief excursus on Hegel's

discussion on Stoicism and scepticism, for it is arguably here that he comes closest to identifying *specific* ideologies, how and why they arise, and their shortcomings with regards to truthful representation.

1.4 Stoicism and Scepticism as Ideological Responses

Given that the emergence of Stoicism in Hegel's *Phenomenology* arises as a dialectical consequence of the master/slave relation, it could be inferred that Hegel implicitly links Stoicism (and by extension certain forms of ideology) with inequitable and exploitative societies. Indeed, insofar as the position of the slave could be naturalised from a Stoic perspective, a decisive function of stoicism in this context would be to obfuscate the detrimental effect of exploitation on the development of consciousness – and so ideology as a potentially malignant construct could also be discerned here. It is not my claim that Hegel himself viewed Stoicism as a malignant construct, nor do I wish to suggest that there is a *necessary* correlation between ideology in itself and states of repression; it will, however, be argued in chapters 5 and 6 that a repressive state apparatus cannot sustain itself *unless* it is supplemented by an ideological formation, and so this is a very pertinent function of ideology. It should be noted that Hegel's description of Stoic consciousness is not a precise summation of the principles of Stoicism, it can perhaps better be understood as describing a stage in the development of self-consciousness that is particularly adapted for or inclined towards an accommodation with Stoicism. With this in mind, I will first outline the emergence of Stoic consciousness in Hegel's *Phenomenology*; I will then describe how this form of consciousness comports with the philosophy of

Stoicism itself, before suggesting ways in which Stoicism can thereby function in an ideological sense.

To return to the master/slave relation; the slave has come to see, through the manipulation and transformation of matter, that *thought* underlies phenomena in general. The external world is no longer perceived to be in opposition to self-consciousness, for insofar as self-externalisation is possible, external objects are subsumed to self-consciousness. However, given the slave's function as a mediator between master and matter, the correlation between the particular thoughts of the slave and material reality is not drawn. There is rather an intuition that *abstract* thought in general is the essential determinate force behind phenomena, and that the specific instances in which this relation manifests are of secondary importance: "Thought underlies reality, but one cannot say in detail how, and so the particular content of the world is necessarily seen as contingent, as just given" (Taylor 2005, p. 158). In perceiving the concrete particulars of materiality as mere contingency the slave has attained a sense of freedom or autonomy, for self-essence here is identified with thought that cannot be affected by and is not dependent upon anything outside of itself (Hegel presumably had in mind the Stoic virtues, which included prudence, justice, courage and moderation). Regardless of one's social position, whether one is master or slave, there can be no impediments to the truth found in the universal concepts of abstract thought. Hegel's critique of this apparent resolution can be seen to follow logically from a point raised in the preliminaries section to this chapter, that 'just as particulars cannot be properly understood without reference to universals, so too are universal concepts unintelligible unless they correspond to material particulars'. In withdrawing to the realm of abstract thought as a source of freedom,

one is only met with *abstract* freedom, a merely formal freedom without content; and this abstractness is said to extend to all Stoic valuations:

> To the question, *What* is good and true, …[Stoicism] again gave for answer the *contentless* thought: The True and the Good shall consist in reasonableness. But this self-identity of thought is again only the pure form in which nothing is determined (Hegel 1977, p. 122).

In order to unpack Hegel's claim here it will be necessary to investigate the tenets of Stoicism itself.

At a glance it may appear strange for Hegel to assign to the Stoic consciousness a depreciation of matter in favour of abstract thought. This is because the Stoic ontology is completely materialist, they claim that for something to exist it must be able to act or be acted upon, and so must be a body. This materialist conception is inclusive of the force that animates bodies or endows them with qualities, what they call pneuma[4] (in the case of humans, pneuma is manifested as the soul). In this context an abstraction would be akin to a necessary fiction or convenient designator, as all existents are essentially particular. However, given that all existing things are particular (the universe being a plenum), it follows that every particular thing that exists is in a direct or indirect causal relationship with everything else; and so this assumes a monistic theory of mind: in order to truly know ourselves we must relate to the whole, of which we are a part. The Emperor Marcus Aurelius expressed this doctrine as follows:

[4] "Because pneuma acts, it must be a body and it appears that the Stoics stressed the fact that its blending with matter is 'through and through' (Galen 47H, Alex. Aph. 48C). Perhaps as a result of this, they developed a theory of mixture which allowed for two bodies to be in the same place at the same time. It should be noted, however, that some scholars (e.g. Sorabji, 1988) think that the claim that pneuma is blended through the totality of matter is a conclusion that the Stoics' critics adversely drew about what some of their statements committed them to. Perhaps instead they proposed merely that pneuma is the matter of a body at a different level of description" (Baltzly 2014).

> Cease not to think of the Universe as one living Being, possessed of a single Substance and a single Soul; and how all things trace back to its single sentience; and how it does all things by a single impulse; and how all existing things are joint causes of all things that come into existence; and how intertwined in the fabric is the thread and how closely woven the web (Aurelius 1953, p. 91).

This reference to the 'whole', then, would be the sort of abstraction that Hegel has in mind. Stoicism abstracts from the apparent discord observable in manifold phenomena to the notion that every particular thing is an emanation from this single substance. Thus Stoic consciousness only comprehends itself in its relation to God, the Universe or Nature (these terms being interchangeable); and so everything it encounters, including the emotions, is conceived to be in a very real sense contingent upon this abstraction.

This monistic view appears to do away with the problem of alienation as self-estrangement, it actually inverts this situation with a conception of 'self' that is inclusive of all things 'other'. However, for Hegel the movement beyond a sense of self-estrangement necessarily implies the progressive development of one's consciousness of freedom, and in this respect Stoicism may appear to be somewhat wanting. If it is true that all things derive from a single source and follow a single impulse, then we can all be said to live in a deterministic state that is arguably incompatible with the emergence of such freedom. Aurelius states that: "Whatever befalls thee was set in train for thee from everlasting, and the interplication of causes was from eternity weaving into one fabric thy existence and the coincident of this event" (Aurelius 1953, p. 263). In a sense, then, Hegel's description of Stoic consciousness as entailing the conception of one's conditions of existence as being 'simply given', outside of one's control and so inessential, is confirmed here.

However, the Stoics were not fatalists, and maintained that they were indeed free. Freedom in Stoicism consists in the doctrine of 'assent' – the superior or guiding aspect of the soul is always free to either assent to or dissent from the judgments we form from our initial impressions of the external world; and there is always the possibility of a range of different causal consequences that can follow from our valuations, which are entirely within our control:

> This borderline which objects cannot cross, this inviolable stronghold of freedom, is the limit of what I shall refer to as the 'inner citadel'. Things cannot penetrate into this citadel: that is, they cannot produce the discourse which we develop about things, or the interpretation which we give of the world and its events (Hadot 1998, p. 107).

Freedom is thus thoroughly subjectified, and so external circumstances cannot have an effect upon us without our assent. 'Harmful' circumstances are only harmful insofar as we judge them to be so, in which case they do indeed have a harmful effect upon the soul – for the Stoics hold that what is good for the soul is that which is in accord with its nature, and its nature cannot be disentwined from the causal network which lead to its present circumstances. It follows that to protest against one's lot in life, or to invest oneself with negative emotions regarding it, is quite irrational and self-defeating – it would be to create discord in that which is naturally inclined towards harmony. Such feelings, then, are considered to be a result of false judgments: "Efface the opinion *I am harmed*, and at once the feeling of being harmed disappears; efface the feeling, and the harm disappears at once" (Aurelius 1953, p. 73); "…Thou canst begin a new life! See but things afresh as thou usedst to see them; for in this consists the new life" (Aurelius 1953, p. 165).

To the extent that Stoic valuations are self-contained and divorced from material practice Hegel can equate them with 'contentless thought', a pure or abstract form of

thought in which nothing is determined. It should be remembered that for Hegel the development of self-consciousness is a process that cannot be undertaken in isolation, it always implies an *active* relationship with something other than itself. Within this schema, then, the monism of Stoicism proves itself to be a severe form of atomisation in practice, in which the Stoic consciousness must revert to a state of empty *passivity* – theoretically removed from the external influences which nonetheless shape it. The Stoic conception of joy, described by Hadot, demonstrates this passivity:

> Living beings experience joy when they fulfil the function for which they are made, and act in accordance with their nature. As we have seen, man fulfils his function *qua* man, and follows his nature as well as universal Nature, when he consents to order: the order of the universe as fixed by Destiny; the order of the City of the World and of human beings, based as it is upon the mutual attraction of rational beings, and hence on the proper nature of mankind; and finally to the order of discourse, which reproduces the relation which Nature has established between substances and attributes, and above all between events which necessarily follow upon one another (Hadot 1998, p. 239).

Joy here essentially consists in passive conformity, insofar as there is only one rational way of attaining it, and that is to consent to whatever material circumstances that one finds oneself in. Harmful emotions, and the non-virtuous acts that follow from them, are the result of straying from this path; and it goes without saying that the immediate victims of non-virtuous acts are always, in an objective sense, the actors and not the acted-upon – for in order to act non-virtuously the actor would have to be in the least accord with their nature. The philosophy of Stoicism undoubtedly provides consolation to the manifestation of consciousness outlined in Hegel's master/slave relation. In doing so, however, the impetus towards overcoming this state in the actualisation of a rational social organisation is necessarily ceded to 'Fate'

or ‘Nature’, and so for Hegel the Stoic consciousness is incompatible with authentic freedom.

It will be shown in chapters 5 and 6 that one of the primary functions of ideology is to ensure the reproduction of the social relations which govern a given society, and that this can be achieved insofar as these relations can be presented as being natural or universally applicable. To be successful, then, an ideological formation must be able to displace any antagonisms internal to the social order it supplements, and reinscribe them as the effects of something ‘other’. From this function it follows that Stoicism could be read as a particularly effective ideology, for there is seemingly no form of social organisation that it could not be adapted to (incidentally, this adaptability will be shown to be a feature it has in common with the Christianity of Paul). With regards to how one should assess the fortunes that may follow from a given social organisation, Aurelius writes:

> …Still it is a fact that death and life, honour and dishonour, pain and pleasure, riches and penury, do among men one and all betide the Good and the Evil alike, being in themselves neither honourable nor shameful. Consequently they are neither good nor evil (Aurelius 1953, p. 35).

The claim here is that there are no external factors that are, in and of themselves, conducive to a good life – health, wealth and esteem are all equally compatible with both virtue and vice, and so from a moral point of view we should treat of such matters indifferently, one should rather: “Fit thyself to the environment that is thy portion, and love the men among whom thy lot is thrown, but whole-heartedly” (Aurelius 1953, p. 151). To stress Stoicism’s inherent susceptibility to ideological misuse is not to say that it is in itself without value – for someone in the formidable circumstances of the slave, for instance, Stoicism could indeed be seen to fulfil an

innate need for a sense of autonomous freedom. However, to the extent that it does this at the expense of, if not justifying, at least obfuscating an absence of freedom in actuality, it is an ambiguous construct. For Hegel, though, the essential problem with Stoicism is not so much its potential function on a societal level; rather, he considers that the logical extension of its implicit premises inevitably commits the Stoic to a form of scepticism that is ultimately untenable.

This scepticism can be seen to arise as a consequence of the Stoic doctrine of assent: while the individual Stoic may be free to assent to or dissent from a judgment as being in conformity to Nature, there can be no neutral standard from which the truth of this judgment could be confirmed; so if two Stoics were to disagree as to whether a particular judgment is worthy of assent, because the Stoic mode of valuation is entirely self-referential, there could be no way to adjudicate. It can be argued, then, that it follows from the premises of Stoicism that opposed or even contradictory judgments could be considered to be equally valid. Problems of this nature lead the Pyrrhonist skeptic Sextus Empiricus to argue that it can never be confirmed that things 'as they appear to us' correspond to anything 'external'; and so the only appropriate way of life is to suspend all judgment:

> We say that the causal origin of the Skeptic Way is the hope of attaining *ataraxia* ['an untroubled and tranquil condition of the soul']. Certain talented people, upset by anomaly in 'the facts' and at a loss as to which of these 'facts' deserve assent, endeavoured to discover what is true in them and what is false, expecting that by settling this they would achieve *ataraxia*. But the main origin of Skepticism is the practice of opposing to each statement an equal statement; it seems to us that doing this brings an end to dogmatizing (Sextus Empiricus 1996, p. 90).

Hegel argues that this sceptic turn introduces a new contradiction in the development of self-consciousness. For the sceptic, it is not simply the case that the concrete particulars of materiality are dismissed as accidental, contingent and inessential; but rather the very nature of their existence is called into question. This position appears to bring us back to a modified variant of 'self-certainty', in which the possibility of our apprehension of the external world is negated *in toto*. Hegel argues that such a position is simply untenable; in advocating or defending scepticism, even in the mere attempt to *live* by sceptic principles, one is continuously confronted with the contingencies of externality:

> [The sceptic consciousness] …affirms the nullity of seeing, hearing, etc., yet it is itself seeing, hearing, etc. It affirms the nullity of ethical principles, and lets its conduct be governed by these very principles. Its deeds and its words always belie one another and equally it has itself the doubly contradictory consciousness of unchangeableness and sameness, and of utter contingency and non-identity with itself (Hegel 1977, p. 125).

The contradictions alluded to here by Hegel pertain to scepticism in both theory and practice. First of all, the 'nullity of ethical principles' that must follow from the suspension of all judgment is itself grounded upon an ethical principle of sorts – namely that the attainment of *ataraxia* is a goal worth striving for. Secondly, even if it were granted that it is hypothetically possible to suspend all judgment, it is not possible to suspend all action; and it is inevitable that we become accustomed to certain patterns of behaviour and sociability that we find to be more reasonable or justifiable than others. This incongruence was well observed by Hume:

> Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds [of scepticism], nature herself suffices to that purpose… I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four

> hour's amusement, I wou'd return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther (Hume 1985, p. 316).

Although the sceptic attitude is fated to negate itself by way of its contradictory nature, it serves the positive function of demonstrating the inseparable aspects of self-consciousness. On the one hand there is the 'Unchangeable' aspect of self-consciousness: its identification with the universality of abstract thought, with *spirit* (or, for the Stoics, with the superior or guiding aspect of the soul); and on the other hand there is self-consciousness' 'Changeable' aspect: its finite and contingent embodiment. These essential and inessential aspects were previously conferred upon the figures of master and slave, with the simple being-for-self of the master being representative of the Unchangeable aspect and the being-for-other of the slave personifying the Changeable aspect. Now the tension between these two aspects is seen to be an inherent condition *within* each individual self-consciousness, there is a movement from external to internal division, and this internally divided subject is designated by Hegel as the *Unhappy Consciousness*.

This stage of consciousness is designated 'unhappy' as it perceives itself to be inextricably cut off from its essential aspect, indeed each attempt at communion with the Unchangeable is necessarily thwarted by the Changeable:

> Whenever it seeks to negate the subjective Changeable aspect and affirm the objective Unchangeable aspect, because this act is an act of consciousness of which the subjective Changeable aspect is a part, consciousness's negation of its subjective Changeable aspect is also an affirmation of its subjective Changeable aspect…The Unhappy Consciousness is this continuous movement… (Rae 2012, p. 32).

The futility of this movement, the inability to find genuine unity with the essential Unchangeable, leads self-consciousness to identify itself with the inessential Changeable. The result of this is that self-consciousness *externalises* its essential aspect, it perceives its *true self* as beyond it, as something to strive for; it is as such thoroughly evocative of a religious mentality. Whatever one makes of Hegel's professed resolution of this tension, his positing of *Geist* that manifests itself in finite consciousness and must necessarily return to itself, the ontological gap within the divided subject defined here is an important foundation for the construction of ideology. For it will be argued that it is in this space that ideology can function to imbue the subject with a semblance of meaningful reconciliation. It is within this framework that Feuerbach establishes his critique of religion.

1.5 The Deification of Human Ideals: Alienation in Feuerbach

"Only in the misery of man lies the birthplace of God…God is what man desires to be; namely, his own essence and goal imagined as an actual being" (Feuerbach 2012, p. 221).

Feuerbach incorporates Hegel's application of the emergence of the divided subject and its concurrent self-externalisation, however, he does not view this as a mere transitional phase in the phenomenological development of consciousness, as something bound to overcome itself given its inherent positive content. Whereas Hegel views the divided subject as something that arises prior to and is partly overcome by an assimilation into a religious community, Feuerbach argues that a religious community, far from ameliorating the existential angst of the divided subject, actually functions to sustain and naturalise the predicament. According to

Feuerbach, all historical conceptions of a theistic God, and it will be shown that his notion of God is closely connected to Hegel's conception of *Geist*, can be read as instances of the deification of human ideals. He maintains that the divine attributes predicated in the figure of God are essentially the objectification of the most revered attributes common to humanity in general:

> Hegel's conception of *Geist* was thus transformed into something more like empirical social theory with a supposedly "emancipatory" potential to itself, a way of demystifying ourselves about what we were really trying to achieve. Even more contentiously, Feuerbach interpreted God to be only a human projection, a fiction "we" inserted into reality to make up for the deficiencies in the existing world[5] (Pinkard 2002, p. 311).

The ideological function behind the objectification of human ideals in a transcendental subject would then be to disassociate humanity from its essential characteristics, and thereby displace any expectation that these characteristics ought to be manifested in a given society. What is attributed to God cannot be attributed to the individual, and if it is true that the attributes of God are essentially human ideals then humanity can be said to have cut itself off from its ideal aspects. This shift of perspective in Feuerbach could allow for the possibility to talk viably about the existence of ideology as false consciousness, to identify false consciousness in a specific case by case sense rather than the general sense discernible in Hegel; for if it can be convincingly demonstrated that theism represents a mystification of empirically identifiable human traits, then it no longer seems necessary to first establish a pure and undistorted epistemological perspective from which to juxtapose 'false' derivations. Although the identification of false consciousness in this context

[5] The structural role of 'fiction' in our *actual* social relations will prove to be a decisive feature in the reformulated conception of ideology I outline in chapters 5 and 6.

does not entail a simultaneous attainment of 'true' or 'authentic' consciousness, it does not necessarily follow that the only other option is to revert to a form of epistemic relativism – for here false consciousness is not related to knowledge in any objective sense, but rather to a particular mode of lived experience.

Feuerbach argues that the origin of religion can be understood as a result of the essential difference between humanity and the other species, and that that difference lies in our mode of self-consciousness. "Religion has its genesis in the *essential difference* between man and the animal – the animals have *no* religion" (Feuerbach 2012, p. 97). Feuerbach draws this distinction because he believes that animals are lacking in a certain aspect of consciousness peculiar to humanity; that although animals can be said to be conscious of themselves as individuals, as beings distinct from other beings and other perceptual objects, they are not conscious of themselves as manifestations of a particular species:

> Thus understood, the animal has a simple, but man a twofold, life… Man is in himself both 'I' and 'You'; he can put himself in the place of another precisely because his species, his essential mode of being – not only his individuality – is an object of thought to him (Feuerbach 2012, p. 98).

Again, this two-fold existence resonates with Hegel's divided subject, with consciousness of individuality corresponding to the Changeable aspect and consciousness of mode of being corresponding to the Unchangeable aspect. However, Feuerbach differs from Hegel with regards to the emphasis imputed to this two-fold state; whereas Hegel argues that such a division is ultimately untenable given the experience of *Geist*, Feuerbach seems to attribute much more ontological significance or permanence to this state, suggesting that the historical persistence of religious feeling is explicable given our very nature. This difference entails a shift in Feuerbach

away from the realm of abstract thought, towards the practical, social affects that such thought engenders. For Feuerbach, consciousness of our essential mode of being, our Unchangeable aspect, "…is not only the basis, but also the object of religion" (Feuerbach 2012, p. 98). It is the basis of religion, for our identification with the individual Changeable aspect creates disunion with our essential mode of being, thus creating a need for reconciliation, a need that culminates in the inauguration of religious feeling.[6] And it is the object of religion, for our externalised essential mode of being *is* precisely what constitutes religion *as such*. The argument that religion is an anthropomorphism, contentious as it may be, requires some clarification, and Feuerbach devotes a great deal of attention in pursuing this point.

What are the defining attributes that constitute the essential mode of being for humanity? Feuerbach argues that they can be divided into three categories: 'Reason, Will, and Heart'. Each and every aspect of the human condition can be classified as an instance of something thought, something willed or something felt. Moreover, regardless of the ways in which the individual person possesses, makes use of, or perceives these traits that together define his/her being, they are all essentially *ends-in-themselves*:

> We pursue knowledge in order to know; love in order to love; will in order to will, that is, in order to be free… Only that which exists for its own sake is true, perfect, and divine. But such is love, such is reason, and such is will. The divine trinity in man, but transcending the individual man, is the unity of reason, love, and will (Feuerbach 2012, p. 99).

[6] Feuerbach is solely concerned with religious phenomena. However, this existential impetus towards a form of reconciliation will be shown to inhere in all ideologies, both secular and religious; so for the sake of argument, the terms 'religious' and 'ideological' could be used interchangeably here.

So the being-of-humanity, what constitutes us, also exists in isolation from us. To demonstrate this Feuerbach goes through the ways in which we experience our mode of being. Regarding love, he asks whether we in fact possess love, or are possessed *by* love, *affected* by *it* from outside; and the same can be considered of the other emotions, do we experience jealousy or anger as arising from an internal source, or do they rather have their origin in externality from us, such that we are able to talk of being affected, transformed or hindered by them? The faculties of reason and will may seem relatively innate, yet Feuerbach asks us to contemplate a state in which we are deeply immersed in thought, to the extent that we lose track of time and a sense of our surroundings, "…is it you who controls reason, or is it rather reason that controls and absorbs you" (Feuerbach 2012, p. 100)? The tools employed and developed by reason are also conferred upon us, language is acquired, and education is gradually accumulated; it may be argued that we are innately endowed with the potential to reason,[7] nevertheless reason, in itself, is extrinsic. With regards to will, Feuerbach asks us to picture a scenario in which we have employed this faculty with the aim of self-improvement or advancement: is this an innate drive, "…or is it rather the energy of will, the power of morality which imposes its rule over you and fills you with indignation of yourself and your individual weaknesses" (Feuerbach 2012, p. 100)?

In short, our Unchangeable aspect or essential mode of being, that without which we are without content, is external to the individual; or rather the extent of its existence exceeds that of the individual consciousnesses in which it manifests. It follows that the conceptual distinction between the inessential and essential aspects of self-consciousness represents a quantitative but not a qualitative difference. These

[7] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1. 13.

reflections allow Feuerbach to contribute an important insight into the phenomenological development of consciousness: "Thus, man becomes conscious of himself through the object that reflects his being; man's self-consciousness is his consciousness of the object" (Feuerbach 2012, p. 101); and it follows that the "…power of the object over him is therefore the power of his own being" (Feuerbach 2012, p. 102). It is at this point that the concept of false consciousness is particularly relevant to Feuerbach. It would arise from a situation where, when confronted with personal limitations of character, the individual mistakenly attributes these limitations to the being-of-humanity itself; in doing so our proper relation to this mode of being would be distorted and its source would be displaced, onto the religious (or ideological) object. But, Feuerbach argues, the fact that we are even aware of these limitations of being is ample evidence that this shift is unwarranted:

> The measure of being is also the measure of the understanding. If the being concerned is limited, its feeling and understanding would be limited, too. But, to a limited being, its limited understanding is not a limitation… In keeping with this, if you therefore think the infinite, you think and confirm the infinity of the power of thought; if you feel the infinite, you feel and confirm the infinity of the power of feeling (Feuerbach 2012, pp. 104-105).

It is from a misconception, then, an identification of the individual with the whole, that the space becomes open for the deification of essences, and this could be considered to be a form of 'false consciousness'. False consciousness would then be, in the Hegelian sense, total identification with our finite Changeable aspect, and subsequently separation from the Unchangeable aspect. It would therefore represent the distortion of both aspects – for, as Feuerbach argues, it is the Unchangeable aspect that gives content to the Changeable. In not recognising the dual nature of consciousness, then, the possibility of false consciousness could be said to arise; and

as is the case with any form of consciousness, false consciousness requires an object; the object of false consciousness can, for our purposes, be identified with the emergence of ideology in a metaphysical sense. It is in this manner that Feuerbach undertakes his critique of religion.

1.6 False Consciousness and Ideology: Feuerbach's Critique of Religion

The object of religious feeling differs from all other objects of the senses; it is unique in that *as object* it cannot be separated from the consciousness of that from which it is conceived (and again, this would be pertinent to any ideological formation construed in this manner): "…in the case of the religious object, consciousness and self-consciousness directly coincide. A sensuous object exists apart from man, but the religious object exists within him…" (Feuerbach 2012, p. 109). As such, consciousness of the religious object and consciousness of the self[8] amount to the same thing. However, awareness of this correspondence is precisely what is lacking in religion as such. The religious object is *felt* internally but *conceived* externally. Although in this regard the concept of self-alienation[9] is particularly relevant to religion, it does not follow that this is entirely negative. As mentioned above, Feuerbach argues that individuals come to know themselves through perceiving the objects that reflect their being; so even if these objects are deified, and thus can tentatively be called ideological, it should not be assumed that this is inherently retrogressive, "…it would be better to say that religion is the first, but indirect, self-consciousness of man" (Feuerbach 2012, p. 110). The notion that religious belief

[8] The term 'self' may be too generic in this sense. Feuerbach seems to have in mind the way in which we come to define ourselves, rather than the emergence of any immediate or practical self-knowledge; as such the term 'self-identity' would perhaps be more suitable.
[9] In both forms: as 'estrangement' from essence and 'externalisation' of essence.

could be false, yet also tend towards advancement of a sort, is developed by Feuerbach in his evaluation of the historical development of religions.

Feuerbach argues that what in early religions was taken to be objective truth is in later religions regarded as false and anthropomorphic. He uses the example of monotheistic condemnation of pagan idolatry, arguing that from the perspective of monotheism, paganism represents the worshiping of one's own essence; and he notes that although this feature is readily recognised in 'other' religious traditions, it has been the case in religiosity that the very same critique has rarely been directed inwardly:

> Every progress in religion means, therefore, a deepening of man's knowledge of himself. But every religion, while designating older religions as idolatrous, looks upon itself as exempted from their fate. It does so necessarily, for otherwise it would no longer be religion (Feuerbach 2012, p. 110).

So what is it that could allow for a retrospective appraisal of older religious traditions as being 'all too human' without extending this critique to one's contemporary beliefs and practices? Feuerbach has alluded to the answer above, namely, 'that the divine attributes predicated in the figure of God are essentially the objectification of the most revered attributes common to humanity in general'. Thus humankind, if it were to live in a hypothetical 'state of nature', would come to worship nature as divine. With the advent of significant cultural and technological advancements, there comes with them a revaluation of divinity: "Where man lives in houses, he encloses his gods in temples. A temple expresses the value which man attaches to beautiful buildings" (Feuerbach 2012, p. 118). This phenomenon extends to subjective evaluations, shaping the way in which morality is conceived: "God, therefore, symbolises humanity's own unfulfilled ideal of moral perfection and at the same time

compensates humanity for its moral shortcomings...” (Pines 1993, pp. 98-99). This last observation, that the deification of moral ideals can function as compensation for individual moral shortcomings, creates problems for the previous argument that religious belief can be false yet tending towards advancement; for if moral perfection is conceived of as being transcendent there leaves little incentive for self-improvement in that area. And so it could be argued that, on the contrary, there is an element of stasis present in religious belief. It is in this respect that one can see just how far ideology could be removed from the self-propelling adaptability associated with *Bildung*. In any case, the full force of Feuerbach’s critique of religion is arguably in his treatment of the ways in which the Deity has historically been conceived, for it is here that he attempts to demonstrate that, deprived of their anthropomorphic influences, such conceptions have in fact *no content* of their own.

Feuerbach argues that for something to exist in an authentic sense it must go beyond the conceptual: “All existence, that is, all existence that really is existence, is qualitative, determinate existence” (Feuerbach 2012, p. 112). A concept, or abstraction, does not have this concrete existence; it is limited in its dependence on that from which it has been abstracted. With this in mind Feuerbach asks us to consider the implications of the not uncommon practice of positing God as a being who is *unknowable*. It seems to follow that the positing of such a being is at the same time the negation of such a being: “By positing God as unknowable… [One] negates God in practice…but he does not negate him in theory… [But this] is only a negative existence…a being that, in view of its effects, is indistinguishable from non-being” (Feuerbach 2012, p. 112). A subtler approach to the conceptualisation of God is to

argue that although the predicates of God are anthropomorphic and limited, it does not follow that this entails a limitation of God *itself*; rather, given the limited and imperfect nature of human understanding, it could only be possible for God to appear to us in a limited and imperfect *form*. Although this approach may be less prone to the charge of contradiction, it still leaves the figure of God *itself* as a somewhat empty abstraction:

> It is not at all possible for me to know whether God as he is in and for himself is something different from what he is for me. The manner in which he exists for me is also the totality of his existence for me (Feuerbach 2012, p. 113).

Feuerbach argues that these approaches rely on a mistaken dichotomy between subject and predicate, a division that allows us to talk of existence and essence in isolation of each other. A recurrent argument in Feuerbach's writing is the question of what *is* the subject if not the sum of its predicates – deprived of its predicates, what is left of the subject? To this Feuerbach would argue that only an empty abstraction is left, and thus only an imaginary existence. This point is articulated well by Thornton:

> …the existence of any entity and its possession of attributes are *necessarily* connected; the distinction between the entity which exists, and its attributes, is merely a *conceptual* one. We are therefore frequently misled into thinking that we can accept that the predicates which we ascribe to God are anthropomorphisms, while denying that God himself, the subject, is an anthropomorphism, because we mistake this *conceptual* distinction for an *ontological* one (Thornton1996, pp. 111-112).

The unacknowledged shift from the conceptual to the ontological could, for our purposes, be identified as an instance of false consciousness. And it follows that any

tradition or belief system arising from such a shift could, if the connection between false consciousness and ideology is maintained, be classified as ideological.

To further demonstrate that a distorted ontological shift has taken place it is important to recall what has been said about divinity; for something to be divine it must exist as an end-in-itself, and such has been the common conception of God: God represents perfection, existing in and for itself. Yet as Feuerbach points out: "The concept of God depends on the concept of justice, kindness, and wisdom…" (Feuerbach 2012, p. 119). Deprived of one or more of these attributes, God is no longer divine, thus no longer 'God'[10]. The attributes predicated in the figure of God, on the other hand, do fit the criteria of divinity: "Justice, wisdom, and, in fact, every determination which constitutes the divinity of God, is determined and known through itself; but God is known and determined by the predicates" (Feuerbach 2012, p. 119). And so false consciousness in this sense would imply not only an unwarranted shift from the conceptual to the ontological, but also an inverted logic in the attributing of value to the subject over the predicates. Before moving on, an important criticism of Feuerbach's critique of religion should be noted; it concerns Feuerbach's almost dogmatic insistence on treating religion in a purely scientific manner and is worth quoting in full:

> Religion is, as… [Feuerbach] clearly saw, a fundamentally important and intriguing human phenomenon – and he was surely right in stressing the centrality of man himself to this phenomenon – but it is a gross misconception to think that religion can be understood by the literal application to it of standards of rationality which are

[10] This example of course refers to the God of the New Testament; however, it could be applicable to other Deities provided the relevant attributes are taken into account.

> pertinent and appropriate for purely factual discourse. As a form of life, religion can rather be comprehended only in terms of the internal logic which governs it, and which both sets it apart from, and determines points of interconnections with, other forms of life (Thornton 1996, pp. 118-119).

The *value* of religion, its effect on the individual and society in general, is of fundamental importance regardless of its epistemic validity, and this extends to any and all ideologies. As such it is an aspect that ought not to be dismissed, and will be investigated in greater detail in the forthcoming chapters.

It has been the purpose of this chapter to demonstrate the grounds on which a connection can be made between the concept of ideology and that of false consciousness, and to suggest that the epistemic limitations stemming from the mind-body problem do not necessarily invalidate such an approach. The investigation thus far has been confined to speculative reflections on the relation of consciousness to the external world, however, ideology in its common usage implies more than just the notions of *true* or *false* belief. Perhaps of greater importance are questions related to how and why ideologies come into existence, how they function, and to what extent they influence social dynamics. It is this practical aspect that concerned Marx, who in expanding on the notion of false consciousness in this direction paved the way for a more concrete definition of ideology. The contribution of Marx to the establishment of a theory of ideology is the subject of the following chapter.

2 The Theory of Ideology in Marx

2.1 An Epistemological or Political Approach?

It would be fair to say that the traditional understanding of the notion of ideology was most firmly established in the writings of Marx and Engels:[11] "For most people, the term 'ideology' is closely bound up with Marxism, and their reactions to the term are largely determined by the association" (Mannheim 1936). However, it is also the case that many differing definitions regarding what is meant by ideology, in use today, are a direct result of the ambiguities inherent in the Marxian treatment of the subject. There is a notable shift of emphasis from Marx's earlier to later writings regarding the sources and functions of ideology. His earlier writings are primarily concerned with the depiction of ideology as being something internally operative within the subject, as an illusion or misperception that can arise within the broader development of self-consciousness; and to that extent it continues with the tradition outlined in the previous chapter. In his later writings ideology is viewed more as a necessary result of our relation to specific social formations, as a natural reflection or justification of these formations. As such ideology seems to transform from a subjective to an objective phenomenon. Having said this, it is not as though Marx has come up with two or more distinct concepts here, as there are elements of the different approaches adhering throughout all of his treatment of ideology. These shifts in emphasis do, however, work to preclude the establishment of a fixed definition of ideology in

[11] The term 'ideology' was actually coined by Destutt de Tracy in 1796; however, it has come to mean quite the opposite of its original signification as a rational 'science of ideas'. See: (Eagleton 2007, p. 66).

Marx, as the two perspectives suggest that the concept may have conflicting functions. These ambiguities,

> …stem in effect from the equivocation…in the work of Marx between ideology as illusion, and ideology as the intellectual armoury of a social class. Or, to put it in another way, they reflect a conflict between the epistemological and political meanings of the term. In the second sense of the word, what matters is not the character of the beliefs in question, but their function and perhaps their origin… (Eagleton 2007, p. 90).

Thus far, the notion of ideology has been considered in an epistemological sense; insofar as ideology can be equated with a form of false consciousness, it seems to follow that the truth or falsity of a belief must be an important aspect of any analysis of ideology. The function of a belief can, however, be analysed quite independently of its specific content; and if it is assumed that a belief's function is what is decisive in ascertaining whether it is ideological, the question of its truth or falsity may be superfluous. Both the epistemological and political approaches to ideology are discernible in Marx. An important aim of this chapter, then, is to establish whether the differing approaches represent a genuine inconsistency in Marx, or whether they are simply expressive of the complex and multi-dimensional structure of ideology.

It should be noted that such an overall appraisal entails a deviation of sorts; an attempted amalgamation of the young and mature Marx with regards to ideology has not been the common practice within the Marxist tradition. A preferred method, popularised by Althusser, has been to talk of an 'epistemological break' having occurred between the two eras, thereby bifurcating the Marxian theory of ideology into two distinct, somewhat incompatible, approaches. This point is well made by Larrain:

> On the one hand is a tradition normally associated with German historicism and idealism, which strongly emphasises the philosophical Marx and relies upon the works of his youth. The concept of ideology, consequently, is mainly worked out in the context of *The German Ideology*, and Marx's economic works are either disregarded as irrelevant for the concept or considered a dangerous reversal of former philosophical achievements. On the other hand, a tradition of positivist origin, to which some forms of structuralism can be associated, emphasises Marx as a scientist and economist and relies upon the works of his maturity (1979, p. 36).

This latter tradition of course, in a likewise manner, relegates the works of the young Marx on ideology as irrelevant to the concept proper. So it will be one of the key aims of this chapter to determine whether such a 'break' in Marx is necessary. In order to comprehend Marx's alternating conception of ideology, and whether the break is justified, it will be necessary to trace his development of the subject through to his mature works. Marx's early works on the matter will be explored primarily through an interpretation of ideology as put forward in his *Theses on Feuerbach* and *The German Ideology*; this will be juxtaposed with how the concept developed further within sections of his *A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy* and *Capital*. This division is a divergence from that which was proposed by Althusser, who argued that *The German Ideology* belongs within the corpus of Marx's 'scientific' work, subsequent to the 'epistemological break':

> In 1845, Marx broke radically with every theory that based history and politics on an essence of man… This rupture with every *philosophical* anthropology or humanism is no secondary detail; it is Marx's scientific discovery. It means that Marx rejected the problematic of the earlier philosophy and adopted a new problematic in one and the same act (Althusser 1969, p. 227).

I do not think that *The German Ideology* is at all representative of a radical break from the concerns of Marx's early writings. As it will be shown, the text can be read as a continuation of Marx's earlier project and does indeed contain elements of an epistemological conception of ideology within a humanist framework.

2.2 '…As in a Camera Obscura': Ideological Inversions

"A clever fellow once got the idea that people drown because they are possessed by the 'idea of gravity'. If they would get this notion out of their heads by seeing it as religious superstition, they would be completely safe from all danger of water. For his entire life he fought against the illusion of gravity while all statistics gave him new and abundant evidence of its harmful effects" (Marx 1967, p. 405).

The 'clever fellow' to whom Marx refers in the satirical passage above is intended to figure as a representative of the Young Hegelians, a prominent group of radical-left leaning Hegelians that Feuerbach was affiliated with. Marx himself was initially sympathetic to the group; however, by the time of writing *The German Ideology*, he had come to consider them to be advocates of a 'pseudo-revolutionary' philosophy. The passage contains what is in essence the realignment entailed in a functional approach to ideology. It is one thing to unmask or deconstruct the logic of an idea, for instance to demonstrate the superstition underlying a religious doctrine; it is quite another thing to ascertain the function a doctrine may have when it is put into practice – the danger of the former approach is that it is prone to neglect the extent to which *false* ideas may themselves engender or be symptomatic of something very *real*. What Marx is suggesting is that the effects of a doctrine are as real as that of gravity, regardless of their inner coherence. It follows that a critique that confines itself to the

level of notional ideas is a superficial one, as it leaves the conditions which engender and sustain such ideas untouched; or as he put it in his *Theses on Feuerbach*: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is, to *change* it" (Marx 1967, p. 402).

This shift of emphasis in Marx has consequences for the notion of ideology that resulted from the investigation in chapter 1. To return to the discussion on Feuerbach; I concluded with the supposition that ideology as false consciousness is born from a shift within consciousness whereby a conceptual distinction is perceived as being an ontological division. It seems to follow, then, that it is enough to comprehend this shift for what it is, an instance of reification, in order to rid oneself of ideological influence. What can be inferred from this is that the whole operation, namely, the establishment of the ideological consciousness, the comprehension that this is an error, and the subsequent return to authenticity, takes place within the individual mind. Implicit in this view is an interpretation of consciousness as being inherently *independent*, although it may be prone to misperception regarding the ontological status of its different aspects. What is missing in Feuerbach's analysis is a proper consideration of the socio-historical contingencies at play when a conception of self-consciousness is developed. For instance, Feuerbach is aware of the historical relativity with regards to humanity's relation to the religious object, but this contingency is lacking in his treatment of our relation to consciousness *as such*. Our perception of the religious object, or rather our perception of our ideal aspects, alters in conformity to the socio-historical period it finds itself in; but the *agent* of perception remains stable, and so *universal*, in the sense that the idealists convey when attributing consciousness as being the primary determinate of material life. It is

this conception that Marx seeks to disclaim, and it is in this context in which the following quote, alluded to at the beginning of chapter 1, is meant:

> The phantoms formed in the human brain, too, are necessary sublimations of man's material life-process which is empirically verifiable and connected with material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness no longer seem to be independent. They have no history or development. Rather, men who develop their material production and their material relationships alter their thinking and the products of their thinking along with their real existence. Consciousness does not determine life, but life determines consciousness (Marx 1967, p. 414).

It is the inversion of the last line, Marx argues, which has been and remains the true source of ideology. It is not that ideology is a subjective distortion or misapprehension of something authentic – it is rather the case that ideology is the illusory representation of an objectively distorted authenticity, a reflection of something quite real.

In his *Theses on Feuerbach* Marx sets out to clarify what he sees as the limitations inherent in Feuerbach's philosophy. He points out that Feuerbach, and to an extent Hegel before him, treats the phenomenon of self-alienation as an objective fact, intrinsic to the human condition. The establishment of a religious world in opposition to a secular world arises in response to this alienation. The progressive conceptions of this phenomenon – alienation from essence in the form of a deity to alienation from species essence – still consider this schism within the subject to be quite natural and even foundational for the development of self-consciousness. Marx believes this is unfounded:

> …[Feuerbach's] work consists in resolving the religious world into its secular basis. But the fact that the secular basis becomes separate from itself and establishes an independent realm in the clouds can only be explained by the cleavage and self-contradictoriness of the secular basis… [It follows that] after the earthly family is found to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then be theoretically and practically nullified (Marx 1967, p. 401).

If the ideals exemplified in the religious world are abstractions from the secular world then it follows that the secular world is not commensurable to its ideals, for the holy/earthly distinction is only possible insofar as what is ideal is utterly disproportionate to what is given. Feuerbach fails to appreciate the consequences of his critique because he views self-alienation as inherent to the individual; it only follows, then, that society as a whole should reflect this state. But Marx argues that this picture is upside-down, society does not reflect a *human essence*, but rather the human essence, if it can so be called, is to be found as the result of individuals' relation to society: "Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the *human* essence. But the essence of man is no abstraction inhering in each single individual. In its actuality it is the ensemble of social relationships" (Marx 1967, p. 402). If the human essence (or rather, that which gives content to or is the object of self-consciousness) is conceived of as the ensemble of social relationships then the phenomenon of self-alienation and religious feeling is no longer necessary, but rather a reaction to specific social circumstances. He continues: "Feuerbach does not see, consequently, that 'religious feeling' is itself a social product and that the abstract individual he analyses belongs to a particular form of society" (Marx 1967, p. 402). So religious feeling according to Marx *is* a result of self-alienation, but this in turn is a result of particular social formations, and so is open to critique and possible change. It is now necessary to turn to Marx's conception of the material foundation of this phenomenon.

In *The German Ideology* Marx argues that self-consciousness is inextricably linked with concrete existence, i.e., 'actual life-process'. What distinguishes us from other animals is not some innate quality of the mind, he argues, but the fact that we are able to produce our own means of subsistence. It is from this act of production, the means of which increasing and diversifying with the historical development of societies, that the space becomes open for the conceptualisation of meaning; but importantly: "…these meanings are constitutive of…[human] activities, not secondary to them. Human existence…is purposive or 'intentional' existence; and these purposive conceptions form the inner grammar of our practical life, without which it would be mere physical motion" (Eagleton 2007, p. 73). Accordingly, the bifurcation of consciousness on the one hand and the material world on the other is misplaced. The two are necessary counterparts of the same phenomenon: we are always conscious *of* a material world *shaped* by human activity. Marx argues that even the most seemingly clear philosophical examples of the mind/matter distinction are not immune from the contingencies of historical development; he makes this case in the following passage with regards to Feuerbach and 'sense-certainty':

> …[Feuerbach] does not see that the world surrounding him is not something directly given and the same from all eternity…it is a historical product, the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations, each standing on the shoulders of the preceding one… Even the objects of the simplest "sensuous certainty" are given to him only through social development, industry, and commercial relationships. The cherry tree, like almost all fruit trees, was transplanted into our zone by *commerce* only a few centuries ago, as we know, and only *by* this action of a particular society in a particular time has it become "sensuous certainty" for Feuerbach (Marx 1967, p. 417).

It should be reiterated that Marx is not simply inverting the idealist notion that consciousness is the impetus of material activity: the fact that we are conscious of a material world shaped by human activity does not negate the role of consciousness in the act of shaping, as material activity in and of itself is just as empty as isolated consciousness. However, while attempting to distance himself from both idealist and materialist schools of thought, Marx maintains that in the last resort it is the life-process, material activity, that gives consciousness content; and he maintains this because he argues that consciousness, properly speaking, is a *social* product.

In order to demonstrate this Marx argues that language ought to be seen as the necessary corollary of consciousness, that it is indeed 'practical consciousness', the expression of reflective consciousness, and that both arise "…from the need and necessity of relationships with other men" (Marx 1967, p. 421). That consciousness necessarily finds expression in language, Marx argues, is evidence of its social nature, he continues:

> Consciousness is thus from the beginning a social product and will remain so as long as men exist. At first consciousness is concerned only with the *immediate* sensuous environment and a limited relationship with other persons and things outside the individual who is becoming conscious of himself… [But] this sheeplike or tribal consciousness receives further development and formation through increased productivity, the increase of needs, and what is fundamental to both, the increase of population (Marx 1967, p. 422).

Developing concurrently with the increase of productivity, of needs, and of population, is an increase in the *division of labour*, and it is this that Marx identifies as the genesis of *alienation*. In the initial phase of consciousness development thought and material activity are considered to be much more directly interwoven, as the

extent of the division of labour is slight; Marx argues that the division at this stage is more or less limited to natural or accidental contingencies, such as the different roles assumed in the act of procreation, those roles arising from differences in mental and physical strength, and so on (Marx 1967, p. 422). But it is inevitable that with increases in population, productivity and needs there arises a shift whereby the activity performed for the sake of individual or familial needs comes into conflict with the needs of the *community*, and vice versa. So here we have a material foundation for some of the mystified dichotomies encountered so far: Changeable-Unchangeable-aspects and existence and essence as representations of the conflict between individual and communal interests. This conflict is still conceived by Marx to be the source of alienation, but unlike the aforementioned representations it situates both sides firmly in the realm of objective, material activity:

> The communal interest does not exist only in the imagination, as something 'general', but first of all in reality, as a mutual interdependence of those individuals among whom the labour is divided. And finally, the division of labour offers us the first example for the fact that man's own act becomes an alien power opposed to him and enslaving him instead of being controlled by him (Marx 1967, p. 424).

The effects of the division of labour are not limited to a sense of alienation but, relatedly, associated by Marx with the rise of ideological consciousness.

How does this arise? Marx argues that with the growth of a particular society there comes with it technological developments which drastically enhance the means of production, fewer people are then needed for direct manual labour; thus the division of labour increases concurrently with the growing gap between labour and industry; alongside this phenomenon there is the emergence of *class* conflicts, essentially concentrated on the disparities between those who have ownership and control of the

means of production and those who do not. The division of labour and the emergence of class relations entail that one's immediate practical activity or occupation is not directly related to one's means of subsistence, as the latter is associated with wages or the accumulation of capital. The extent to which this division is conceived to be absolute, where one's practical activity is conceived as being independent or removed from the social relations of production, is the extent to which ideological consciousness is made possible:

> For this ideological subdivision within a class, 1. *Occupation becomes independent through the division of labor*; everybody thinks of his craft as the true one. Because it is determined by the nature of the craft itself, one necessarily has illusions about the connection of his craft with reality (Marx 1967, p. 472).

The apparent separation between occupation and social relations of production is most pronounced where there arises a division between mental and material labour; mental labour certainly has the appearance of independence, however Marx is at pains to stress that this form of 'independence' must itself assume as natural (or irrelevant) the divisions of labour necessitated by the particular mode of production which gives rise to its possibility (unless, of course, the mental labour in question addresses this relation). For Marx, the problematic result of this conceptual estrangement is that it can give rise to a class of 'ideologists' who, in their 'estranged activity', actually function as the unwitting apologists of a particular mode of production; and Marx is quite relentless in attributing this function to many of his contemporaries working in the fields of political economy and academic philosophy. This mental or 'ideological' alienation arising from the material alienation in the division of labour is said to develop as follows:

> The division of labour is a true division only from the moment a division of material and mental labour appears. <<The first form of ideologists, *priests*, is concurrent. >>

> From this moment on consciousness can really boast of being something other than consciousness of existing practice, of *really* representing something without representing something real. From this moment on consciousness can emancipate itself from the world and proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. (Marx 1967, pp. 422-423).

Thus we have the first sketches of Marx's conception of ideology, the mistaken assumption of the *autonomy* of theoretical ideas, their dissociation from the material conditions of which they are a reflection; it is the absence of the recognition that the *possibility* for 'pure', abstract ideas, only arises as a result of the formation of specific relations of production contingent on specific historical developments. The socio-historical relativity of 'ideological' ideas is negated and they tend to take on the form of *universality*, for the material conditions of those espousing such ideas do not overtly reveal their genesis. Thus:

> …[Marx] produced…a theory of the class character of consciousness, i.e. of the limits of its intellectual horizon which reflect or reproduce the limits of communication imposed by the division of society into classes (or nations, etc.). The basis of the explanation is the obstacle to universality inscribed in the conditions of material life, beyond which it is only possible to think in imagination… Ideological consciousness is, first, the dream of an impossible universality (Balibar 1996, p. 48).

The consequences of this conception of ideology are problematic. If the sphere of our understanding is fixed by, or even simply reflective of, our social role within a given mode of production, and our only recourse from this situation is in the imagination, then the limits of our 'intellectual horizon' are troublingly restrictive. There is a danger that in dismantling the faux-universality of ideology in this way, Marx comes close to introducing a form of class essentialism that could be equally oppressive; for it could be argued that what follows from this is that it is a matter of little importance

whether one's thoughts are ideological or non-ideological: either we live with the naïve illusion of self-determined universal ideas or accept that our thoughts are simply representations of a material life-process beyond our direct control; neither option offers the hope of affective change. The determinism at the heart of such a conception is also at odds with the 'purposive' or 'intentional' nature of human consciousness earlier identified with Marx.

The model of ideology as *illusion* is given much needed refinement in a later passage of *The German Ideology*, making it more compatible with Marx's notions of the interdependence of thought and action. Here the function of ideology is broadened to include its role in political struggles and permutations, and thereby restore some much-needed agency to the ideological subject:

> In every epoch the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas, that is, the class that is the ruling *material* power of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* power. The class having the means of material production has also control over the means of intellectual production, so that it also controls, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of intellectual production. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas, hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one and therefore the ideas of its domination (Marx 1967, p. 438).

This new approach appears to invert the implications of the previous passages; ideology now, far from being thoughts dissociated from and ineffectual towards material activity, becomes the guiding force of material activity. Ideology is here conceived of as a collection of ideas that are systematically utilised to maintain the status quo of exploitative relations of production between people. In order to demonstrate this Marx asks us to compare and contrast the guiding values aligned

with the various forms of government practiced by the ruling classes over the ages; he notes that the idea of 'honour' and 'loyalty' was espoused during the age of aristocracy, that 'freedom' and 'equality' arise as dominant ideas concurrently with bourgeois rule, but also that the absence of a definitive ruling class does not negate the role of ideology in social manipulation: "For example, in an age and in a country where royal power, aristocracy, and bourgeoisie are contending for domination and where control is shared, the doctrine of the separation of powers proves to be the dominant idea and is expressed as an 'eternal law'" (Marx 1967, p. 438). The function of ideology is the same in all of these formulations: to attempt to naturalise the social order of a given time by way of demonstrating that it is the expression of *universal* ideas; but unlike the abstract universals of the ideology as illusion model, these ideas are directly interwoven with the fabric of material relations of production, whether they be for the purposes of establishing, maintaining, or overturning a given social order. The pertinence of this function of ideology is still clearly discernible today; David Harvey proposes that we consider the likely reaction to a hypothetical Wall Street protester who declares that, "Growth Is Bad, Stop It Now":

> …would that be considered an anticapitalist sentiment? You bet it would. You would be dismissed, however, not necessarily for being anticapitalist but for being antigrowth, because growth is considered both inevitable and good. Zero growth signals serious problems… We all happily sit around and say growth is good, technological change is good and so capitalism, which requires both, must also be good. This is the sort of common belief system that Gramsci often referred to as 'hegemony' (Harvey 2010, pp. 200-201).

Ideology as a hegemonic belief system or set of guiding values certainly retains aspects of the illusion model; for to be most effective it requires a similar inversion in which the conditions for a particular mode of production are reconceptualised as the

goal. But this sort of hegemony also implies and can only arise from a struggle with points of opposition, and the unfolding history of transformations in hegemonic ideals (from the preponderance accorded to honour and loyalty, to equality, to individual liberty…) attests to the fact that it is never fixed or absolute but rather a site of contestation. It could be, then, that the 'class character of consciousness' implied by the illusion model is not necessarily an essentialist concept, insofar as it is granted that the intellectual limits imposed by our material conditions are themselves constantly evolving.

There still remains a certain discrepancy in the two approaches as to how ideology is conceived to function. For the illusion model ideology is a set of distorted and dissociated mental conceptions, the ideological subject is unaware of the actual relation between these conceptions and their material foundations; it would appear to the subject, then, that the extent to which these conceptions are expressive of hegemonic interests is incidental, the 'unintended consequences' of one's belief. The political model implies a much more direct relation between one's mental conceptions and material interests, as ideology is here conceived as the predominant apparatus through which these interests are expressed. The discrepancy has been noted by Eagleton:

> …this *political* model of ideology does not entirely square with the more epistemological conception of it as thought oblivious to its social origin. What is it, then, that makes ideas ideological? That they are cut loose from their social moorings, or that they are weapons of a dominant class? And does the latter necessarily entail the former (2007, p. 79)?

It would have to be said that the latter does not necessarily entail the former; if the full implications of the two approaches are combined we have a counterintuitive scenario

in which ideology is both the expression of the interests of a dominant class and the form in which these interests are mystified. If no awareness of the social moorings of ideological thought is granted to the subject of ideology, the question immediately arises as to what, then, is responsible for the formation of dominant ideologies (appeals to some sort of historical telos or 'invisible hand' come to mind as possible, rather 'ideological' sounding, answers to this problem). I think it more plausible to argue that the discrepancy between Marx's political and epistemological conceptions of ideology could perhaps be representative of two poles encompassing a spectrum of ideological effects; that ideology could range from the simple and overt expression of interests, to the conscious or unconscious obfuscation of these interests, through to the voluntary acquiescence to opposing interests as a result of ideological obfuscation or 'false consciousness'; that the effects of ideology could thus vary from subject to subject depending on the socio-historical circumstances. It should be noted that the general tendency of ideology towards the naturalisation of a particular social order would remain the same in all these instances; whether a set of ideological beliefs is cynically espoused as instrumental tools of manipulation *or* whether the beliefs are held to be valuable in and of themselves, the general effect is the same. Conjoining the political and epistemological approaches to ideology would then have the effect of loosening the epistemic restrictions of the latter and thereby leave open the possibility of non-ideological thought; for the political model's emphasis on the historical transformations of social orders guided and reinforced by class struggle and ideological thought still allows for the active engagement of the subject in the contestation of ideas. Whether this resolution is sufficient is debatable, and it appears that Marx himself was dissatisfied with these results, for in his later writings he continues to attempt a more internally-consistent, concrete conception of ideology.

2.3 Base and Superstructure

In his *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* Marx continues to deviate from the illusion model of ideology, although some of its central tenets are retained. He begins again by asserting that social being, or material activity, is the determinate force behind consciousness as such; human beings are, in the first place, forced into relations with one another in order to produce the necessities required for their subsistence. This basic state of affairs exists prior to and independent of the will or considerations of the individual person. What Marx is arguing is that any genuine conception of political economy needs to take this as its starting point, for he maintains that everything else is a mere extension of it:

> The sum total of these relations of production [between people]…constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general (Marx 1951, pp. 328-329).

It is here that Marx introduces the formula of base and superstructure as the guiding principle of ideological discourse, and with it there are some not insignificant changes to the concept. The economic base is presented as the field in which our aforementioned 'actual life-process' or 'concrete existence' develops, it contains the sum total of a given society's means of production (raw materials and instruments of production) and labour power; and what arises from this is an ideological superstructure which governs how these social relations are ordered. That the

superstructure is ideological can be inferred from the proposition that 'definite forms of social consciousness' correspond to *it*, and not to the base.[12]

However, this new formulation appears to imply a shift in the ontological status of ideology. It was previously argued, for instance, that the notions of 'freedom' and 'equality' could be said to be ideological insofar as it could be demonstrated that it was illusory to believe that they actually corresponded to material reality (what made the notions ideological was precisely their separation from an economic base); but this argument cannot apply to ideology as it develops in the superstructure. What comprises the superstructural apparatus, its legal, political, religious and myriad cultural institutions, is not a product of false consciousness; it all manifestly exists. So what is it that makes the superstructure ideological? Presumably, it is in the implied neutrality of the institutions at work within it. To recall, it was the tendency of both the epistemological and political approaches to ideology that particular mental conceptions, or expressions of interests, were reconceptualised as being universal ideas. It would follow that what makes the superstructure ideological is not so much that it mystifies or distorts a given set of social relations, but rather that it naturalises such relations. Marx's argument is that the actual function of these institutions is to, in a sense, manipulate or condition our mental conceptions into the acceptance of a contingent set of relations of production, which are governed by the economic base. The primacy that Marx affords to the economic base is grounded in the fact that,

[12] The precise nature of what Marx intended by this 'correspondence' between base and superstructure has been widely contested: for the view that the base is the primary element in this relation, see: (Cohen 1978, pp. 134-174); for the similar, yet qualified, view that though the base and superstructure are causally reciprocal, the base is 'determinant in the last instance', see: (Althusser & Balibar 1970, pp. 56-60). For the view that base and superstructure are distinct constructs, yet do not relate to each other in a causal or deterministic sense, see: (Harvey 2010, pp. 189-201) and (Eagleton 2000). Finally, for the view that the distinction between base and superstructure is in itself untenable, see: (Plamenatz 1954, pp. 21-28), (Acton 1962, pp. 177-178) and (Thompson 1995, pp. 191-218). I will return to the ambiguity of the base/superstructure relation shortly.

historically, drastic changes to the economic base have resulted in similarly drastic changes to the superstructure. An example of this is given in the first volume of *Capital* (1990, pp. 877-895). Here Marx outlines the 'prelude to the revolution' in the mode of production in England (from feudalism to capitalism), which he argued to have occurred during the late 15th and early 16th centuries. He notes that the rapid expansion of wool manufacture in Flanders led to a corresponding rise in the price of wool in England. These circumstances contributed towards the dissolution of the bands of feudal retainers, a process which involved the large-scale expropriation of agricultural land in order for it to be converted from arable land into pasture (the mass eviction of the peasants from the land that this entailed contributed towards the development of a 'relative surplus population', which Marx argues to be a condition for the development of a capitalist mode of production). These developments arose in contradiction to the relations of production as stipulated by feudal law, which held that both lords and peasantry were entitled to the land. However, the reorganisation suited the changes in the composition of the means of production; and so after a period of (Marx would say futile) legislative struggle, the superstructure was transformed so as to legitimise the new relations of production – primarily through the passing of the Enclosure Act in 1773. Thus Marx argues: "The economic structure of capitalist society has grown out of the economic structure of feudal society. The dissolution of the latter set free the elements of the former" (Marx 1990, p. 875), and with this development there coincides a necessary transformation of our mental conceptions to the extent that they are conditioned by the superstructure, in which the accepted meaning of property rights and relations is drastically altered.

Marx consequently argues that it has been an historical precedent and, more controversially, a necessary condition of the society of his day, that the material productive forces of a society will tend to develop to such an extent that they come into direct conflict with the existing relations of production; it is here that the ideological superstructure is no longer able to sustain the status quo and, without such support, there is by necessity a transformation of these relations:

> With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, esthetic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out (Marx 1951, p. 329).

So the ideological superstructure actually serves the double-function of legitimising a given society or becoming the space for contesting its transformation, depending on the relative equilibrium or conflict between its mode and relations of production. But Marx does not conceive of this as an unending process, rather, he envisions it as leading necessarily to the formation of a communist society free of exploitative relations of production; thus a society without need of an ideological superstructure to sustain it. It would appear to follow that it is in such circumstances that the development of non-ideological consciousness would be made possible.[13]

The base/superstructure model of ideology introduces some new difficulties; the first problem relates to determination – in what sense is the base primary, and is it always

[13] It should be noted that this thesis, arguably Marx's most contentious, is consistent with the implications of Hegel's dialectic of the master/slave relation. Here as well, the development of authentic self-consciousness only arises as the *outcome* of an ideal state; the nature of what such a state would be is of course debatable.

so? The transition from feudalism to capitalism seemed to clearly entail instances of the political and legal superstructure being determined by changes in the economic base; however, once this transition has occurred, and provided that the new mode of production is relatively stable, the result would appear to be that the superstructure now determines the economic base. Moreover, if the changes to the economic base are principally changes in the relations of production, i.e. changes in the ownership and control of the means of production (or changes in property relations), and given that these relations are essentially legal (or superstructural) in character, it is questionable whether a 'base' can ever really be distinct from a 'superstructure': "For a system of property is more properly called a legal than an economic phenomenon, and therefore belongs to the Marxian 'superstructure' and not to the Marxian 'basis'" (Plamenatz 1954, p. 25). G. A. Cohen provides a sound response to this objection, he argues that it is incorrect to regard the production relations that Marx associates with the economic base as being relations of ownership, that they are rather relations of *de facto* power or effective control: "Marx must have meant that…[the producer] first enjoyed over his instruments an effective control structurally analogous to, but unaccompanied by, legal ownership" (Cohen 1989, p. 96). The fact that in a stable and law-abiding society economic relations are expressed through superstructural rights does not contradict the claim that such rights arise from or are expressive of economic relations determined by the base; indeed, Cohen notes that effective legal rights always already entail *de facto* power and effective control. It is in this way that Cohen is able to argue that the superstructure has a distinct yet contingent existence in relation to the economic base, that it serves as a necessary *functional* explanation for the latter's organisation: "legal structures rise and fall according as they promote or frustrate forms of economy favoured by the productive forces. Property relations have

the character they do because production relations require that they have it" (Cohen 1978, p. 231). Cohen's reformulation has the advantage of preserving the base and superstructure as distinct phenomena, and gives a plausible account of the way in which the former is primary; however, it does so at the expense of seriously limiting the scope of what can be assigned to the superstructure, and thereby neutralises the exhaustiveness of the base/superstructure model as a representation of ideological formations. It is arguable that Marx did not sufficiently demarcate what was intended by the term 'superstructure', hence the difficulties in interpretation, but it is certainly true that it was intended to encompass a great deal more than the legal and political institutions that Cohen addresses. As quoted above, Marx refers to an 'entire immense superstructure' including its '…legal, political, religious, esthetic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict [within the base] and fight it out'. While Marx would likely argue that many a mental conception of your average priest or metaphysician was ideological, the reason for this could hardly be simply because they are an expression of dominant property relations (even if that may indirectly be the case).

Another problem with assigning primacy to the economic base in the formation of ideological superstructures is the inconvenient fact that historically (and particularly in the 20th century), vastly different superstructural apparatuses have arisen from the same capitalist mode of production; these apparatuses have ranged in various degrees from the expression of democratic to fascistic organisational principles, and it is hard not to infer from this that there is more to the explication of these differences than what the base/superstructure model allows. The variety, or, it could be argued, the unpredictability of the nature of the superstructures compatible with this economic

base discredits the notion that the contradictions inherent to the latter will inevitably lead to the revolutionary transformations that Marx envisioned. Indeed, Seyla Benhabib has noted that this discrepancy has been one of the primary concerns of the revisionist Marxism of the Frankfurt School:

> The core of what has come to be known as the 'critical social theory of the Frankfurt School' in the English-speaking world since the late 1960s is this analysis of the transformation of liberal nineteenth-century capitalism into mass democracies on the one hand and totalitarian formations of the national socialist sort on the other (Benhabib 2012, p. 73).

It may still be granted that, in any case, the superstructure always functions to reinforce the economic base. However, it no longer seems plausible to conceive of it as arising from or being *determined* by the economic base alone, although it may be that even this relatively modest claim is too presumptuous. If it is assumed that bases need superstructures to function, and yet there is no *necessary* tendency for a given base to be corresponded with any *specific* superstructure, then the benefit of their demarcation must be called into question. To return to the criticism of the base/superstructure model advanced by Plamenatz: there still appears to be an insufficient justification for the designation of these two aspects of social relations as being in some sense autonomous (this autonomy implied by the language that the 'one' arises from the 'other'). H.B. Acton has rejected the legitimacy of a division between a society's base and its superstructure outright:

> …we have already argued that there is no such thing as *purely* 'economic' behaviour, but that moral, as well as legal (or quasi-legal) and political factors are involved in production and exchange. It is now necessary to point out that, in saying this, we are saying that moral, legal, and political ideas, outlooks, theories, are involved in

> production and exchange, for moral, legal, and political behaviour is conscious behaviour that requires thought and talk (1962, pp. 177-178).

If Acton is correct, and his conclusion is certainly plausible, then it seems meaningless to talk of base and superstructure as being distinct from one another and thus a theory based on their division would be necessarily inconsistent. If this were the case, it would seem that Marx has not progressed far from his earlier writings in attempting a more concrete, scientific approach to the theory of ideology.

It can be seen, then, why it is that the base/superstructure model has been criticised for being unable to account for the complexities of contemporary societies. However, in response to such criticism, a novel approach to the model has been advanced by Terry Eagleton, who maintains that it is still of inherent value. Eagleton agrees with critics in that the formula, as put forward by Marx, can be rightfully attacked for being "…static, hierarchical, dualistic and mechanistic…" (Eagleton 2007, p. 82), but argues that a nuanced approach of interpretation can and should be applied. He argues that it is mistaken to attempt to somehow demarcate certain institutions or practices as belonging to either the base or the superstructure of a society; that what should be drawn from Marx's model is rather an emphasis on the *relational* nature of the ideological superstructure; the way in which the superstructure functions in regards to the base determines its ideological nature. It is not a matter of being an expression *of* it but a matter of being in collusion *with* it. He gives the example of the ways in which we can approach a text:

> You can examine a literary text in terms of its publishing history, in which case, as far as the Marxist model goes, you are treating it as part of the material base of social production. Or you can count up the number of semicolons, an activity which would seem to fit neatly into neither level of the model. But once you explore that text's

> relations to a dominant ideology, then you are treating it superstructurally. The doctrine, in other words, becomes rather more plausible when it is viewed less as an ontological carving of the world down the middle than as a question of different perspectives (2007, p. 83).

If applied with a perspectivist approach, it does seem plausible that the base/superstructure model could be redeemed. In another example of its relevance Eagleton points towards the status of money; on the one hand we are taught from an early age that it lacks inherent value, that 'the best things in life are free', and yet it serves as a foundation for society itself and permeates, in some way, almost all social relations. Eagleton argues that these two facts would form quite a paradox for an observer unassimilated to such a system:

> first, …[money is] so utterly vital a good that it engage[s] almost everybody's energies most of the time, and second, …[it is] held in hearty contempt. …[The observer] would soon find himself puzzling over the performative contradiction between what we said about money and what we did with it, or, if you prefer, over a certain discrepancy between material base and moral superstructure (Eagleton 2000, p. 231).

So here it is not the status of money in itself that determines its position within the base/superstructure model but the perspective from which it is contemplated, and the extent to which its determinant function in social organisation is obfuscated would presumably determine whether it falls within the ideological superstructure. This approach has the advantage of circumventing any deterministic reading of the base/superstructure model; again, though, the question arises as to whether this signifies an advance on Marx's earlier treatment of ideology. If most any practice or institution can be considered to be belonging to the economic base from one perspective, the superstructure from another, then it seems that all the model has

achieved is a refined formulation of the tension between thought and material activity discussed in *The German Ideology*, with less emphasis on the determining role of material activity.

2.4 The Problem of Ideology

"Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, it is true, but with a false consciousness. The real motive forces impelling him remain unknown to him; otherwise it simply would not be an ideological process" (Engels 1972, p. 648).

The term 'ideology' is largely absent from Marx's magnum opus, *Capital*. In this work the main notion previously attributed to his theory of ideology, alienation through mystification and/or naturalisation, is now applied to a new concept – that of the 'fetishism of commodities'. In short, commodity fetishism implies that people come to see the products of their labour as having value in and of themselves, which leads to a situation where human relations are governed by 'things', rather than the opposite, more natural state of affairs. The similarities between this concept and what was said in *The German Ideology* are apparent in the following excerpt:

> In order…to find an analogy [with commodity fetishism], …we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities… (Marx 1990, p. 165).

Despite the familiar theme of alienation, Marx is now focussed on a much more specific, definable phenomenon; most of the epistemic problems related to the theory of ideology are no longer applicable here, and for that reason the concept of commodity fetishism will not be pursued further.

From the preceding investigation in can be seen that, insofar as Marx concerns himself with the concept of ideology, there is no clear break between his early and later works, the alternating ways in which Marx approaches ideology occur and recur throughout his work, and are more likely a reflection of the heterogeneous nature of the concept itself. Having said that, there does seem to be some tension between the two main approaches to the concept discernible in Marx. To summarise the investigation thus far: first, there is the illusion model; here ideology is taken to include morality, religion, metaphysics and any 'Weltanschauung' conceived of as being autonomous, and in many passages, this definition is extended to consciousness itself. The idea being that material activity, or relations of production, is the determinate factor behind the conceptions we make of the world. To consider the inverse to be the case would then be an example of ideological thinking. Second, the functional (or political) model; this is best illustrated by Marx's argument that 'the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas'; here ideology serves the function of naturalising exploitative relations of production by assuming them to be the expression of abstract or universal ideas.[14] In both cases, ideology implies a 'misrepresentation' of the *actual* state of affairs. Where they differ is that in the former instance, material activity is seen as determining consciousness, and in the latter the reverse seems to be the case. Now it need not be assumed that therefore

[14] The base/superstructure model can be read as a refined formulation of this approach.

these two approaches are contradictory; it could be argued that, depending on the socio-historical circumstances, a society could be in thrall to one or the other of these conceptions; it would follow then, that the illusion model represents a state in which ideological influence is especially strong, and therefore the tensions within the material base are effectively masked. In a less stable, conflictive environment, the functional model of ideology would be operative, presumably with the intent of affecting its stronger variant. This seems to be a possible resolution to some of the discrepancies in Marx's treatment on the subject of ideology. One glaring flaw remains, however, and it pertains to a problem in the very pursuit of establishing a theory of ideology.

On the face of it, it seems that any coherent theory of ideology necessarily implies some sort of standard from which to juxtapose ideological errors. Even if a standard of *truth* is unnecessary, as with the functional approach, the possibility of *some* sort of non-ideological perspective is certainly implied by the theory. In identifying various ideological forms, Marx invariably contrasts them with that 'which can be determined with the precision of natural science' (1951, p. 329). Thus the underlying assumption of Marx's theory of ideology is that the scientific method is free from any ideological influence, an assumption that seems overly optimistic at best. So without a solid epistemic foundation and, as Barth points out, not without some unsubstantiated assumptions of his own, Marx appears to be left vulnerable to the very same criticisms applied to the 'ideologists':

> Underlying [Marx's] …political and economic criticism of contemporary German conditions is an idea of man and of social justice; and history, too, insofar as it culminates in the self-restoration of man in classless society, is the realisation of the idea of justice and of a real humanism. Were one to treat this idea in the same way as

> Marx treated the political and philosophic ideologies of feudal and bourgeois society, then the ideology of the proletariat, too, would have to be unmasked as the interest-conditioned ideology of a single class. Thus, Marx's theory of ideology turns back against him (1976, p. 110).

Are these criticisms enough to invalidate a theory of ideology? I do not think so; Marx's investigation sheds a powerful light on the extent to which external influences affect our thought processes. The fact that his theory is not immune from the self-same criticism, or that a veritable criteria of truth has not been established, does not do away with this; on the contrary, it invites the question as to whether perhaps *all* thought is in some sense ideological. Although Marx sets out as a critic, he is still very much working within the conceptual framework and tradition adopted by Feuerbach and Hegel before him; all three talk of an almost teleological process of transformation, whereby human nature develops from a state of alienation to one of authenticity. I suggest that there may in fact be certain ideological influences that explain this common schema. To that end, in the following two chapters, this investigation will turn to a genealogical account of these ideas.

3 A Motif of Transformation

3.1 Alienation, 'Ideology' and Authenticity

The previous two chapters have demonstrated how Marx's theory of ideology has parallels with and can be seen as a continuation of aspects of the works of Hegel and Feuerbach. It was argued firstly that, though Marx's theory is in no way self-sufficient, it raises unavoidable questions about the autonomy of our thought processes, and the extent to which they are externally determined. Secondly, it was suggested that there is a recurrent theme at play in the works of all three writers discussed: a teleological process of transformation, whereby consciousness or human nature progresses from a state of alienation, through various forms of what could be called ideology, and towards a state of authenticity, as yet unreached. Given this observation it seems appropriate, following the criticism of Hans Barth, to turn Marx's theory of ideology against his own writings and those of his predecessors, so as to properly investigate the potentially all-encompassing nature of ideological thought processes. In order to do this, it will first be necessary to begin again by clarifying how this motif of transformation is clearly discernible in Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx, the present chapter will address this topic. The following chapter will suggest that the motif of transformation has clear parallels with the actual state of affairs in the contemporary Germany of Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx; and that the tumultuously evolving nature of that period's political, religious and cultural landscape could be read as a defining influence on this philosophical affinity.

Although I argue that the motif of transformation is characteristic of the three philosophers under discussion, this should in no way imply a renunciation of the significant divergences undertaken by them with regards to their aims, their methods, and their conclusions. The texts deemed pertinent to the concept of ideology, examined so far, do have a disparate publishing history, spanning a period from 1807 to 1859; and so the potential ideological influences *behind* these reflections on ideology must likewise differ in certain respects. Nonetheless, I think that the similarities are worthy of further examination. Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx differ in their conceptions of the precise cause, and historical emergence, of alienation; but that this state has emerged necessarily is a supposition of which they seem to be in agreement. What I argue could be read as their conceptions of ideology, will likewise be shown to have certain differences, yet here I believe them to be in the most agreement. Of more interest are their conceptions of authenticity, for despite the shared trajectory it is here that they diverge the most, ranging from an organic state arising naturally from a properly philosophic understanding of absolute spirit, to a more self-sufficient form of humanism free of religious mystification, to a classless society free of exploitation. Obviously, given the different conceptions of authenticity, the assumed path towards such a state must likewise differ; Marx's work on the relationship between thought and action outlined in the previous chapter is relevant here.

3.2 Hegel

"The state consists in the march of God in the world, and its basis is the power of reason actualising itself as will" (Hegel 1991, p. 279).

For Hegel, alienation in both its positive and negative forms is always intimately connected with the schism between particularity and universality, between the internal and the external. This movement between subject and object, which Hegel views as central to the development of self-consciousness, was outlined in chapter 1, but more can be said of it in order to clarify its role in the motif of transformation. First of all, in terms of the origin of alienation as estrangement, Hegel seems to consign this to humanity's prehistory: all genuine historical attempts at the formation of society have had, at least implicitly, the abolition of the alienation of the 'divided subject' as a fundamental goal. For Hegel argues that the emergence of the divided subject is ontologically prior to any formation of a family, tribe, Volk or State: there is no nostalgic yearning for an imagined state of nature in Hegel. Historically, he argues, the trouble has been in attaining an authentic mediation, with the subject repeatedly coming to identify with one aspect of consciousness, individual or universal, which in turn necessarily engenders a striving for the other, the situation of the 'unhappy consciousness' referred to in chapter 1:

> For the estrangement per se, it makes no difference whether man considers himself absolutely independent or absolutely dependent upon a distant God, whether he views himself as an isolated individual or as an existence en masse, whether he is turned totally outward or totally inward; for each of these extremes already implies the other, and 'the more independent and separate the internal becomes, so likewise the more independent and separate the external becomes' (Löwith 1965, p. 162).

Löwith goes on to note that, as Hegel takes the situation of the divided subject to be the *presupposition* of philosophy, unity is then its inherent goal (ibid, p. 163). It is in this way that Hegel links the course of world history with philosophy in general, with each epoch seen as a manifestation of Reason's attempted sublimation of its alienation from itself, of its drive towards a self-sufficient reconciliation.

What can tentatively be called ideology in Hegel, then, is any outlook containing the mistaken assumption that self-sufficiency can be attained with the abandonment of this striving for unity, with a total identification with just one aspect of consciousness. This being the case with the ideologies of ancient Stoicism and skepticism outlined in the first chapter, ideologies that are incapable of withstanding their own presuppositions:

> Neither stoicism nor skepticism, however, was capable of sustaining itself – skepticism (as the truth of stoicism, as that to which one is driven when one attempts to cash out the Stoic attempts at a free life) ends up dissolving itself, since it ultimately has to submit its own freedom to doubt to the same kind of skeptical questioning to which it submits everything else, and, in doing so, exposes itself to itself as being only the result of the contingent thoughts of a particular individual (Pinkard 2002, p. 231).

Although these ideologies are self-contradictory, it need not be assumed that their conception was irrational. Hegel maintains that it is the work of Reason to attempt to rationalise the world around it, to identify oppositions and apparent contradictions and work towards their reconciliation, to "…legitimate existing reality by conceiving it philosophically" (Hyppolite 1969, p. 108). Stoicism and skepticism are self-contradictory, but only insofar as the Roman world they belong to is itself self-contradictory, for they serve as the latter's rational reflection. Hegel sees the downfall of ancient Rome as the inevitable symptom of a situation in which the average individual is completely alienated from universal life, a situation he paints in colourful terms:

> The dissolution of the whole ends in universal misfortune and the demise of ethical life, in which the individualities of nations [Völker] perish in the unity of a pantheon,

> and all individuals [Einzelnen] sink to the level of private persons with an *equal* status and with formal rights, who are accordingly held together only by an abstract and arbitrary will of increasingly monstrous proportions (Hegel 1991, p. 379).

It could be said, then, that for Hegel an ideology would be comparable to an incomplete philosophy; one that may accurately formulate an individual's relation to a contingent historical epoch, but which fails to come to an understanding of the individual's relation to universality *as such*. Collective comprehension of this failure, then, leads to revolution. In a passage that seems to anticipate the central argument of Marx's concept of ideology in *The German Ideology*, Hegel, in the preface to his *Philosophy of Right*, writes:

> As far as the individual is concerned, each individual is in any case a *child of his time*; thus philosophy, too, is *its own time comprehended in thoughts*. It is just as foolish to imagine that any philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as that an individual can overleap his own time or leap over Rhodes (Hegel 1991, pp. 21-22).

What prevents Hegel from drawing a materialist conception of thought from this is precisely his emphasis on the motif of transformation. For he sees in each successive epoch he examines, the so-called Oriental, Greek, Roman and Germanic realms, a closer approximation to the truth of the mediation and unity of particularity and universality. Only in the development towards the modern state, he argues, does the individual come to recognise his/her particularity and relation to the external, not as two opposing extremes, but as two interdependent aspects, each reinforcing the truth of the other. Thus it is important to examine Hegel's conception of the state, for with its realisation, the possibility of ideological thought would presumably be impossible.

3.3 The Hegelian State

That the state is presented as the quintessential criterion for the development of freedom and self-consciousness generally is not antithetical to Hegel's overall philosophy. Among the notes taken from Hegel's lectures on the Philosophy of Right is the following passage:

> The state in and for itself is the ethical whole, the actualization of freedom, and it is the absolute end of reason that freedom should be actual…Any discussion of freedom must begin not with individuality [Einzelheit] or the individual self-consciousness, but only with the essence of self-consciousness; for whether human beings know it or not, this essence realizes itself as a self-sufficient power of which single individuals [die einzelnen Individuen] are only moments (Hegel 1991, p. 279).

An interesting consequence arises from this. As Hegel argues that the state in and for itself is the actualisation of freedom and the essence of self-consciousness, it follows that it is a necessary condition that one must be a member of a state in order to be free. Having said this, it is not the case that any manifestation of the state will suffice for the actualisation of this freedom; it was precisely the merely formal freedom and abstract rights derived from membership in the Roman realm of antiquity that precluded the development of authentic self-consciousness. It is essential that the individual comes to see his/her particular ends as being in harmony with the ends of the state. The opposition between duties and rights, Hegel maintains, disappears with the recognition that one's rights can only be actualised through the state, hence ones duties towards the state are synonymous with the exercising of ones rights: "…[the state's] strength consists in the unity of its universal and ultimate end with the particular interest of individuals, in the fact that they have *duties* towards the state to the same extent as they also have rights" (Hegel 1991, p. 283).

In order to understand Hegel's peculiar conception of the organic development of the state, leading up to its authentic culmination in the actualisation of freedom, it should be read in conjunction with his more general conception in the *Philosophy of History*. World history is here presented as a gradual movement towards a progressively more comprehensive consciousness of Freedom; Hegel capitalises Freedom here in order to distinguish it from freedom in the sense of arbitrary will or caprice, in order to be genuinely conscious of one's Freedom the individual must be able to encounter the universal aspect of consciousness as being manifested concretely in the rational organisation of the state. Again, this 'idea' of Freedom is seen as being implicit in all states throughout history, and it is argued that it has been the role of the historical process that peoples become conscious of and work to resolve and sublimate the contradictions arising between the various manifestations of the state and the authentic idea behind them; further, it is argued that this gradual transformation should be understood in teleological terms:

> In actual existence Progress appears as an advancing from the imperfect to the more perfect; but the former must not be understood abstractly as *only* the imperfect, but as something which involves the very opposite of itself – the so-called perfect – as a *germ* or impulse. So – reflectively, at least – *possibility* points to something destined to become actual… [thus] the instinctive movement – the inherent impulse in the life of the soul – to break through the rind of mere nature, sensuousness, and that which is alien to it, and to attain to the light of consciousness, *i.e.* to itself (Hegel 1956, p. 57).

Thus history, conceived here as the development of the consciousness of Freedom, is not an unending process, and indeed Hegel appears to argue for its imminent consummation: "The History of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom…the Eastern nations knew only that *one* is free; the Greek

and Roman world only that *some* are free; while *we* know that all men absolutely (man as *man*) are free…" (Hegel 1956, p. 19). Corresponding to this somewhat crude geographical differentiation are certain forms of political governance, each being reflective of the degree to which a particular society has attained to this ideal of Freedom. Thus, according to Hegel's schema, the Eastern civilisations are to be distinguished by the institution of various forms of despotism; the Greek and Roman world, where 'some' are free, is consistent with the formation of democratic and aristocratic rule; finally, after transitioning through the stages of feudalism, we approach an organisation suitable for the recognition that 'all' are free: constitutional monarchy, incidentally being a system of governance not too dissimilar from the Prussia of Hegel's day.

3.4 Ideological Reflections on Slavery in Hegel?

Before proceeding to an analysis of the motif of transformation in the work of Feuerbach it may be interesting to note what appears to be a conspicuous inconsistency in Hegel's treatment of slavery. The institution of slavery is antithetical to the Hegelian philosophical system in its developed form; as discussed earlier in the section on the master/slave dialectic, this holds true for both slave and master with regards to the development of self-consciousness. In reference to ancient Greece Hegel contends that the institution of slavery contributed to the development of an 'aesthetic democracy' by releasing the citizens from the necessity of mechanical labour; as a consequence, he implies that it was also a significant factor in the fall of Greece, as its existence necessarily inhibited the development of authentic morality:

> Slavery does not cease until the Will has been infinitely self-reflected – until Right is conceived as appertaining to every freeman, and the term freeman is regarded as a synonym for man in his generic nature as endowed with Reason. But here [in ancient Athens]…we still occupy the standpoint of Morality as mere Wont and Custom, and therefore known only as a peculiarity attaching to a certain kind of existence (not as absolute and universal Law) (Hegel 1956, p. 255).

One of the fundamental advancements Hegel attributes in the main to the rise of Christianity is precisely this insight, that each individual, as a finite instantiation of absolute spirit, is fundamentally of the same nature, and thus:

> …under Christianity Slavery is impossible…each unit of mankind is an object of the grace of God and of the Divine purpose: 'God will have *all* men to be saved.' Utterly excluding all speciality, therefore, man, in and for himself – in his simple quality of man – has infinite value; and this infinite value abolishes, *ipso facto*, all particularity attaching to birth or country (Hegel 1956, p. 334).

Keeping these remarks in mind it is interesting to examine Hegel's analysis of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade contemporaneous to his time, in which "…Negroes are enslaved by Europeans and sold to America" (Hegel 1956, p. 96). It seems that the logical response to this would be either to consider this state of affairs to be evidence of a serious regression in the world-historical process, or perhaps even to be a cause for the abandonment of the idea that progress is essentially the latter's guiding force. Hegel considers neither of these options. Rather, in order to account for this deviation from the historical development of the consciousness of freedom, Hegel simply dismisses the peoples of Africa as being hitherto 'unhistorical' and therefore removed from having any effect on the stage of history proper. Acknowledgement of the detrimental effect of slavery on the slave-owners and the cultures that institutionalise it, of such importance in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is absent in the *Philosophy of*

History with regards to the Atlantic slave trade. Likewise, the positive element attributed to the position of the slave in the master/slave dialectic of the *Phenomenology* is absent here as well. The whole phenomenon, it is implied uncharacteristically by Hegel, is to be seen purely as a result of African 'character':

> …it is manifest that want of self-control distinguishes the character of the Negroes. This condition is capable of no development or culture, and as we see them at this day, such have they always been. The only essential connection that has existed and continued between the Negroes and the Europeans is that of slavery. In this the Negroes see nothing unbecoming them, and the English who have done the most for abolishing the slave-trade and slavery, are treated by the Negroes themselves as enemies. For it is a point of first importance with the Kings [in Africa]…to sell their captured enemies, or even their own subjects; and viewed in the light of such facts, we may conclude *slavery* to have been the occasion of the increase of human feeling among the Negroes (Hegel 1956, p. 98).

It may be tempting to dismiss the above remarks as being simply a case of the Eurocentric racism so pervasive in Hegel's time, and while this is most likely true, it may not be all there is to it. Habermas has argued that a central deficiency in totalising philosophical systems such as Hegel's is the tendency for otherwise unrelated phenomena to be subsumed and relegated to positions of lesser importance than the overall narrative. With regards to the relation of the individual to the state he quotes Dieter Henrich who argues that "… 'The individual will, which Hegel calls subjective, is totally bound to the institutional order and only justified at all to the extent that the institutions are one with it'" (Habermas 1990, p. 40); what results from such an outlook, argues Habermas:

> …[is that] when the 'state' of the *Philosophy of Right* gets elevated to the 'reality of the substantive will, to something rational in and for itself,' this has the consequence (already perceived as provocative by Hegel's contemporaries) that political movements that press beyond the boundaries drawn by philosophy offend against reason itself (Habermas 1990, pp. 40-41).

In a like manner, if a phenomenon such as the Trans-Atlantic slave trade occurs, a phenomenon which falls outside of the boundaries drawn by a philosophy of history synonymous with a progressive development of the consciousness of freedom, then such a phenomenon can be said to offend against reason, to have no connection to the overall, substantive, development of the world-historical process. It could be said, then, that the effect of attempting to subsume everything under a great philosophical system can easily result in making one blind to any and all anomalies that contradict the narrative; that it could perhaps, quite ironically, result in what could be called 'ideological tunnel-vision'. It can be argued that this tendency to totalise in Hegel is a feature that must be shared by any and all ideologies, insofar as it has been shown that the strongest variant of an ideological formation is the universalisation of contingent mental conceptions; thus ideology entails an inherent tension: a dominant ideology must be presented as being both sufficiently self-contained but also 'an' ideology, differentiable from other conceptions; as Plamenatz rightly notes:

> Even a 'total ideology' is limited; it consists of the ideas and beliefs of a particular people or group of peoples, or a particular epoch… Even if it is held to include all their ideas and beliefs, and therefore to be quite literally a *total* ideology, it is still only one such ideology among others (Plamenatz 1970, pp. 27-28).

Of course what needs to be inferred from all this is that the more 'total' an ideology is conceived, the more fully it is representative of a subject's worldview, the greater is the likelihood of selective bias when a judgment is formed; and that this danger may

not be limited to ideology in its 'totalitarian' manifestations, but is rather a potentiality inherent to ideology as such.

3.5 Feuerbach

"…[W]hat is impossible, inconceivable, to one age, is to the coming age conceivable and possible. My life is bound to a limited time; not so the life of humanity. The history of mankind consists of nothing else than a continuous and progressive conquest of limits…" (Feuerbach 2008, p. 127).

In contrast to Hegel and Marx, Feuerbach places less emphasis on the historical *necessity* of the emergence of alienation and ideology for the development of self-consciousness, in part because he views the former phenomena almost exclusively in relation to religious sentiment and religious sentiment cannot be said to be a universally lived experience; the contrast between the 'heathen' and 'Christian' philosophies of antiquity is frequently referred to in his writings. Also, the distinction made between alienation and ideology is less discernible in Feuerbach, for here the emergence of alienation simultaneously implies the emergence of ideology in the form of religious sentiment. Nevertheless, given the historical fact of religion and Feuerbach's progressive genealogical account of it, conceiving of it as he does as being affected and determined by the progression of human society in general, it can be said that Feuerbach's philosophy shares the same motif of transformation as that of Hegel and Marx. The nature and cause of alienation and ideology in Feuerbach, the shift in perspective from the conceptual to the ontological and resulting 'false consciousness', has been covered in chapter 1. However, more can be said of the psychological disposition that this engenders, as well as the implied subsequent

potential detriment for society. For the assurance of a historical progression towards a state of authenticity is less forceful in Feuerbach, and the possibility of regression hinted at; here at times the tone is of a polemical imploration for change, for instance in place of the Lord's Prayer:

> Think, therefore, with every morsel of bread which relieves thee from the pain of hunger, with every draught of wine which cheers thy heart, of the God who confers these beneficent gifts upon thee, - think of man! …[and] in thy gratitude towards man forget not gratitude towards holy nature! (Feuerbach 2008, p. 227).

In *The Essence of Christianity* Feuerbach examines the consequences that follow from the deification of human ideals entailed in religious sentiment. Of particular significance with regards to Christianity, but applicable to monotheism in general, is the belief in the active role of Providence and its relation to prayer as well as the immortality of the soul. It is argued that these beliefs, among others, signify a longing for limitless subjectivity, a state of being at odds with the limits experienced in actual existence. As noted, Feuerbach maintains that the origin of this distinction between the limited and limitless is in our dual consciousness of individual and species being. The essence of the individual lies in the species itself, yet in the religious sentiment this essence is conceived of as being transcendent and inhering in a personal God; as such essence is considered to be distinct from and, in this life at least, unattainable to the individual; the limitations imposed upon the individual by the species itself, by nature, are duly negated. Faith in the coming of a perfectly limitless heavenly existence, as the truth of humanity, entails a devaluation of this temporally limited existence. In a passage anticipating the problematic theme of nihilism common to the late nineteenth century, Feuerbach writes:

> Where the heavenly life is a truth, the earthly life is a lie; where imagination is all, reality is nothing. To him who believes in an eternal heavenly life, the present life loses its value, - or rather, it has already lost its value: belief in the heavenly life is belief in the worthlessness and nothingness of this life (Feuerbach 2008, p. 134).

So the religious sentiment could contain within it a certain contempt and indifference to the progress or otherwise of the historical process. On the other hand, as Feuerbach argues, *if* the religious sentiment is properly analysed and understood for what it is in essence: an anthropomorphic representation of all ideals pertaining to humanity as such, over and above each individual; then the possibility for authentic self-consciousness is made open. It follows that an ideology could potentially function as *either* a cause *or* a curative for the problem of nihilism, and that this will depend on how closely the ideology's conception of authenticity is relatable to or practicable for one's actual life. Interestingly Nietzsche, a much more vehement critic of Christianity than Feuerbach, associated nihilism not with Christianity's proliferation but with its decline, suggesting that the vacuum that this could leave in place of our sense of values, meaning and purpose is of serious existential import:

> God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. 'How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it' (GS 125)?

For both thinkers, then, an ideology can be read as a quite natural, possibly necessary, corrective against the encroachment of nihilism; however, both would further insist that, unless the ideology entails an affirmation of one's life as it is, it can only ever be

a transitory measure; hence the importance Feuerbach attributes to an 'authentic', anthropological reading of religious sentiment.

For Feuerbach a life conducive to the development of authenticity must be one in which the individual plays an active role in both his or her immediate existence as well as that of the society, or some representation of the species, to which the individual finds his/herself; where the meaning or truth of the individual is found in the whole and the truth and meaning of the whole is found in the successive generations of individuals which constitute it. Fundamentally, where this state of affairs is actually apparent, where the organisational principles that govern the whole are not themselves conducive to a feeling of alienation amongst individuals, where there is no longer a need for religious mystification:

> The more empty life is, the fuller, the more concrete is God. The impoverishing of the real world and the enriching of God is one act. Only the poor man has a rich God. God springs out of the feeling of a want; what man is in need of, whether this be a definite and therefore conscious, or an unconscious need, - that is God. Thus the disconsolate feeling of a void, of loneliness, needed a God in whom there is society, a union of beings fervently loving each other (Feuerbach 2008, p. 62).

The necessary condition of the individual being 'at home' in and not distinct from society at large in order for authentic self-consciousness is one which Feuerbach inherits from Hegel and which will be further developed by Marx. Hegel's conception of an ideal State, given that it both subsumes and develops itself upon central tenets of Christianity, is not embraced by Feuerbach, though it must be noted that Hegel's understanding of Christianity and the nature of his idea of God is itself open to interpretation and certainly not orthodox. So the question remains as to the precise

means by which the emergence of this state of identification with oneself in both the individual and general sense can be attained in Feuerbach.

That the demystification of the essence of religious sentiment is enough to inaugurate this state of authenticity is not an explicit claim made by Feuerbach in *The Essence of Christianity*; however, the lack of any alternative or subsequent prescriptions leads one to consider that this may be the assumption. On the other hand, the idea that religious mystification may be a genuine reflection of *real* antagonisms or contradictions in actual existence, a point of serious importance to Marx, is certainly touched upon by Feuerbach; and he does argue that the emergence of an authentic humanism can be conceived to be the result of the disappearance of these antagonisms and contradictions. The precise nature of this humanism, however, remains ambiguous; primarily, his stance serves to reiterate the notion that the aims of the individual and that of society are essentially the same (or at least ought to be), thus a view towards their interdependence is necessary for growth:

> In general, whatever a man makes the essential aim of his life, he proclaims to be his soul; for it is the principle of motion in him. But through his aim, through the activity in which he realizes this aim, man is not only something for himself, but also something for others, for the general life, the species. He therefore who lives in the consciousness of the species as a reality, regards his existence for others, his relation to society, his utility to the public, as that existence which is one with the existence of his own essence – as his immortal existence (Feuerbach 2008, p. 141).

As a general claim there is nothing objectionable here, though whether it could be used as a foundation for a particular set of ethical principles remains questionable. The problem is that Feuerbach does not specify as to what sort of 'activity' would be best suited to realise one's 'essential aim' in life; it could even be inferred that any

activity would suffice, provided it was undertaken by someone who lives 'in the consciousness of the species as a reality' – thus we circle back to a very abstract and idealised notion of authenticity. Despite this Gagern has argued that Feuerbach's philosophy is indeed constitutive of what he calls an *ethical humanism of strict confinement*. The confinement here refers to the fact that Feuerbach's humanism focuses on each individual in his or her immediate experience, in the setting free of each individual's innate moral and intellectual forces; Gagern argues that this can be contrasted with 'all metaphysical optimism, all utopianism and all nihilism' – for here the ethical imperative is simply the process of disillusionment with the prevailing systems of religious and philosophical beliefs in order to be able to develop the essential capacities that always already inhere within us: "…Feuerbach…held that there would never be a fundamental change in the relations between humans as long as any kind of belief or ideology supplied the powerful with excuses and deviated the hopes of the weak" (Gagern 1971, p. 140). Gagern does, however, concede that this humanistic conception is limited, insofar as the optimal conditions and activities that this process of disillusionment would presumably produce are in no way self-evident:

> …[H]ow does this social-organic complex, which is the Feuerbachian individual, ever arrive at the understanding of the values that make a possible behavior optimal? The answer obviously is that he cannot. All he can do is sharpen his natural instincts for his own sake, generate a feeling of sympathy for fellow man, and accept the results of the sciences as guiding principles for his actions (Gagern 1979, p. 44).

It is difficult to see how this resultant, rather general, conception of humanism can be sufficiently differentiated from other ethical stances. Of more interest, I would argue, is the question of whether such a conception could function as a practical guideline for the type of reconciliation that Feuerbach argues for, and if not, what could? How is the finite individual to be genuinely reconciled, in any given concrete instance, with

his/her infinitely evolving species being? Feuerbach's lack of detail on this matter left him open to the rebuke of fellow Young-Hegelian, Max Stirner, who argued that Feuerbach, far from overcoming the problem of alienation, had merely replaced one 'object' of alienation with another:

> As Stirner would have it, Feuerbach is merely the most recent representative of those preachers of pathological obsessions and fixed ideas. In this instance, the "spook" now being presented as a "higher essence" is termed "man". …And so, just as Feuerbach's "genetico-critical examination" had earlier revealed Hegelian philosophy to be a covert theology, so Stirner revealed Feuerbach's humanism as a covert religion (Stepelevich 1978, pp. 457-458).

While this criticism may appear to be unwarranted, given that Feuerbach was arguing *against* the separation of essence into 'higher' or 'lower' aspects, arguing that these aspects were 'two sides of the same coin' as it were, his lack of elucidation on the precise nature of species being and its relation to the individual prevents a genuine way out of the problem.

Despite these difficulties, Feuerbach was of significant importance in emphasising that material activity is the fundamental expression of essence, insofar as it relates the individual to society and vice versa, and this was a supposition wholly endorsed by Marx. Yet whereas Feuerbach writes of an authentic state as being a realisable aim within a humanist, demystified, framework; Marx contends that, at present, this conception of authenticity is simply not possible, with or without the existence of religious sentiment. He maintains that authenticity is unattainable within a system of capitalist production, an insight that is developed from his unique conception of the phenomenon of alienation.

3.6 Marx

"The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that *for man the supreme being is man*, and thus with the *categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions* in which man is a debased, enslaved, neglected and contemptible being…" (Marx 1992, p. 251).

Marx's theory of alienation is introduced in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844. Here he argues that the concept of alienation examined by Feuerbach should be read as a mystified expression of a genuine or concrete phenomenon: alienated labour. Thus the notion that the cause and potential rehabilitation of the alienated individual should be sought in a distorted conceptulisation and its rectification is mistaken. People envisage their essence in a religious manner, as external or beyond, precisely because in a capitalist system based on the production of commodities, human essence *is* estranged, *is* alienated. In order to understand this one must consider Marx's conception of essence or human nature. Following Hegel and Feuerbach Marx does not view essence as something static or immutable; on the contrary, essence is conceived as being the development of genuine human activity: self-expression, creativity and the realisation of innumerable dormant potentialities. The relation of Marx's conception to the teleological presumptions of his predecessors is made clear by Erich Fromm, an important figure in the highlighting of the humanist orientation in Marx's work, who writes that according to Marx:

> …[M]an…change[s] in the course of history; he develops himself; he transforms himself, he is the product of history; since *he* makes his history, he is his own product. History is the history of man's self-realization; it is nothing but the self-

> creation of man through the process of his work and his production (Fromm 1972, P. 26).

Fromm goes on to note the essential importance that labour must then have for this conception of essence as self-actualisation:

> Labor is the self-expression of man, an expression of his individual physical and mental powers. In this process of genuine activity man develops himself, becomes himself; work is not only a means to an end - the product - but an end in itself, the meaningful expression of human energy; hence work is enjoyable (Fromm 1972, pp. 41-42).

Thus given the centrality of labour to essence it can be seen how its alienation must entail in general an individual's loss of, or in the least dissociation from, an authentic relationship to society at large. Marx argues that the alienated labour of modern capitalism results in four interrelated consequences: the worker is alienated from the product of his/her labour; in the division of labour the worker is alienated from the very production of his/her product; as essence is conceived of as being self-actualisation through labour the worker is alienated from his/her essence; and finally as a result of the above the workers are alienated from one another. Thus alienated labour entails alienation from nature or the external world, from others and from oneself.

The worker is alienated from the product of his/her labour insofar as the object of labour, work, does not belong to the worker but must be sought out and received, if possible, from an external source, from one who owns the capital to purchase labour-power; thus labour itself is treated as a commodity to be bought and sold. Given that the means of subsistence is in almost all cases a product of labour, it follows that one must first be a worker in order to subsist; so the possibility of living as a physical

subject is now a consequence *of* labour rather than life being the possibility *for* labour; thus labour is *forced* labour and what ideally should be self-confirmation and actualisation of life is transformed into an alien force over and above it. The alienation of the products of labour is inextricably linked to the alienation of production itself; the worker is forced to sell, or alienate, his/her labour-power in exchange for wages, thus the products of labour are alienated and therefore inconsequential to the worker. Marx argues that this system leads to a situation where: "Life itself appears only as a *means of life*" (Marx 1992, p. 328); and vice versa one's means of life becomes the totality of life itself:

> The result is that man (the worker) feels that he is acting freely only in his animal functions – eating, drinking and procreating, or at most in his dwelling and adornment – while in his human functions he is nothing more than an animal. It is true that eating, drinking and procreating, etc., are also genuine human functions. However, when abstracted from other aspects of human activity and turned into final and exclusive ends, they are animal (Marx 1992, p. 327).

The third consequence of alienated labour is then, by extension, related to the worker's alienation from his/her essence itself, from *species being*. Marx acquired the notion of essence as species being in the form of self-actualisation from Feuerbach, however, unlike Feuerbach he is much more precise in the specification of the means by which this self-actualisation can take place. For Marx, self-actualisation is the process by which people appropriate and transform nature into something reflective of their *own* being, *actual* self-objectification; he argues that the universality of humanity, what differentiates it from other species, is in the possibility of extending this self-objectification throughout the whole of nature:

> The universality of man manifests itself in practice in that universality which makes the whole of nature his *inorganic* body, (1) as a direct means of life and (2) as the matter, the object and the tool of his life activity… It is therefore in his fashioning of the objective that man really proves himself to be a *species-being*. Such production is his active species-life (Marx 1992, pp. 328-329).

These two manifestations of universality are estranged from the worker as a result of alienated labour, primarily in their forced separation: "Firstly it estranges species-life and individual life, and secondly it turns the latter, in its abstract form, into the purpose of the former, also in its abstract and estranged form" (Marx 1992, p. 328). Species-life, transformed into a process of repetitive and menial labour, serves the sole purpose of maintaining the subsistence of individual life; yet this individual life, estranged from species-life, is necessarily reduced to a state of mere subsistence; the separation of these two aspects entails their mutual alienation from the individual. The possibility for authentic self-objectification through the direct appropriation and transformation of nature in its myriad possible manifestations, from the satisfaction of immediate biological needs to aesthetic expression, is accordingly cut off from the wage-labourer.

It follows quite naturally from the reduction of all life-activity to the satisfaction of the bare means of subsistence for each individual that individuals are subsequently estranged from one another. Marx argues that a society based upon the production of commodities will be mired with instances of abstract individualism and endless competition, the atomisation of society:

> The *alien* being to whom labour and the product of labour belong, in whose service labour is performed and for whose enjoyment the product of labour is created, can be none other than *man* himself. If the product of labour does not belong to the worker,

> and if it confronts him as an alien power, this is only possible because it belongs to *a man other than the worker*. If his activity is a torment for him, it must provide *pleasure* and enjoyment for someone else. Not the gods, not nature, but only man himself can be this alien power over men… Every self-estrangement of man from himself and nature is manifested in the relationship he sets up between other men and himself and nature (Marx 1992, pp. 330-331).

The outward manifestation of these systematised relations of alienation, Marx contends, is private property; private property is the *result of* a particular organisation of the relations of production, not its cause; however, he maintains that once this form of alienation has reached its culmination then both phenomena, alienated labour and private property, enter into a reciprocal relationship, the one providing the possibility for the other: "…[Private property] is (a) the *product* of alienated labour and (b) the *means* through which labour is alienated, the *realization of this alienation*" (Marx 1992, p. 332). It follows for Marx that for authentic labour, and thus authenticity in general, to be possible, private property must be abolished. The purported role of ideology in sustaining a system of alienation has been covered above; however, the precise manner in which Marx envisages a coming state of authenticity, and the difficulties therewith, need to be addressed.

3.7 The Communist Ideal

"In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (Marx & Engels 2002, p. 244).

Given the various and in many ways disparate interpretations of Marx's idea of communism, both in theory and practice, it is perhaps best to begin by identifying precisely what Marx did *not* mean by the concept. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* Marx is at pains to disassociate his views from what he considers to be the 'crude communism' of the contemporaneous utopian socialists. In particular, he argues against the notion that the abolition of private property can be achieved through the implementation of equal wages for all. Contrary to its aim, he maintains that this development would in fact amount to a system of private property in its complete or extreme form; whereby everything and anything without the capability of being possessed by everyone in the form of private property tends towards destruction:

> …[Crude communism] wants to abstract from talent, etc., by *force*. Physical, immediate *possession* is the only purpose of life and existence as far as this communism is concerned; the category of *worker* is not abolished but extended to all men; the relation of private property remains the relation of the community to the world of things… (For crude communism) the community is simply a community of *labour* and equality of *wages*, which are paid out by the communal capital, the *community* as universal capitalist (Marx 1992, pp. 346-347).

The assumption that Marx argued against the atomising and alienating effects of extreme competition in favour of a general process of *levelling*, including in terms of individual talents, is thus a mistaken one. In *The Communist Manifesto* the abolition of private property is given further clarification. The appropriation of property in general, the appropriation and/or consumption of various products of labour, is not that which is intended by the abolition of private property; the assumption that the latter entails the deprivation of the enjoyment of the product of one's own labour is likewise mistaken; indeed, Marx argues that the modes of production which made

such appropriations possible, such as those of the 'petty artisan' and the 'small peasant', are themselves to a large extent abolished with industrialised capitalist production. What is meant by the abolition of private property is the abolition of the existing *relations* of property, whereby wage labour is used to create capital, capital which exploits wage labour, and can only increase "…upon condition of begetting a new supply of wage labour for fresh exploitation" (Marx & Engels 2002, pp. 235-236). Insofar as the abolition of private property is limited to a revolution in the relations of property it is not without historical precedent:

> All property relations in the past have continually been subject to historical change consequent upon the change in historical conditions… All that we want to do away with is the miserable character of this appropriation, under which the labourer lives merely to increase capital, and is allowed to live only in so far as the interest of the ruling class requires it (Marx & Engels 2002, pp. 235-236).

Despite these clarifications there remains a certain level of ambiguity with regards to the communist ideal, not just in terms of its positive implementation but also in defining, precisely, what is meant by it. Marx is indeed contemptuous of utopian formulations of the future developments of societies. One cannot, however, help but notice a sense of utopianism in his own descriptions of communism, descriptions which remain for the most part on an abstract level. For instance, here is the idea as introduced in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*:

> *Communism* is the *positive* supersession of *private property* as *human self-estrangement*, and hence the true *appropriation* of the *human* essence through and for man; it is the complete restoration of man to himself as a *social*, i.e. human, being, a restoration which has become conscious and which takes place within the entire wealth of previous periods of development. This communism, as fully developed

> naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the *genuine* resolution of the conflict between man and nature, and between man and man, the true resolution of the conflict between existence and being, between objectification and self-affirmation,[15] between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be the solution (Marx 1992, p. 348).

Such grandiose proclamations are of course susceptible to criticisms from the standpoint of pragmatic considerations. Perhaps, though, the difficulty in establishing a concrete definition lies in the fact that Marx is attempting to identify a stage in historical development hitherto unreached, and is mindful of Hegel's insight into the inability of one being able to 'overleap one's own time or leap over Rhodes'. Unlike some of his contemporary socialist thinkers, who Marx charges with attempting to find justifications for their views by way of identifying particular historical precedents of communal life, Marx argues that the contradictions inherent in the current relations of production will necessarily give rise to something *new*, the precise nature of which to be divulged in the course of history. Here perhaps an objection based on the 'actually existing socialism' of the twentieth century could be raised as evidence of Marx's failure; however, the dearth of un-alienated labour that such regimes produced, and the class antagonisms that were retained and used to sustain them (the concentration of power in the revolutionary vanguard and CPSU in the USSR, in the CPC in China, etc.), can be used to support the argument that such systems are far removed from being the embodiment of the precepts endorsed by Marx; indeed, that they are much closer to being the realisation of the 'crude communism' of which he was highly critical, which he saw as an extreme variant of the existing exploitative

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[15] The apparent resolution of the conflict between objectification and self-affirmation will be shown to be constitutional to the notion of ideological interpellation outlined in Chapter 5.

property relations and thus not something *new* or *revolutionised* but merely developed in a different direction.

It is true that Marx comes close to outlining a positive plan for the implementation of authentic communism in *The Communist Manifesto*,[16] however, it must be noted that these measures were intended to be temporary in nature. Marx acknowledged their despotic character and considered them to be in themselves inadequate for sustainable economic activity. Also, although Marx maintained that these measures would be generally appropriate for 'the most advanced countries', it is important to take seriously his qualification that "…[these] measures will of course be different in different countries" (Marx & Engels 2002, p. 243); given their complex structures and the diversity of levels of development in various nation states Marx was wary of endorsing a universally applicable approach to the implementation of the communist ideal. Although the above may be enough to discredit the idea that one can turn to particular historical instances of self-proclaimed communism and their myriad faults in order to discredit Marx, a stronger line of criticism remains, and this relates to the very tenability, on a theoretical as well as a practical level, of a system based around the idea of a 'free association of producers'; an association commensurable to the needs of all at the expense of none, an apolitical system of government. This is the

[16] I refer here to the ten measures outlined for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat': "1) Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes. 2) A heavy progressive or graduated income tax. 3) Abolition of all right of inheritance. 4) Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels. 5) Centralization of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly. 6) Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State. 7) Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of wastelands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan. 8) Equal liability of all to labour. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture. 9) Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the population over the country. 10) Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, &c., &c." (Marx & Engels 2002, pp. 243-244).

ideal situation envisioned to arise from the development and subsequent sublimation of a dictatorship of the proletariat: "When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character" (Marx & Engels 2002, p. 244). The question here, and this too is of central importance to an analysis of Hegel, is of the very possibility, or perhaps even desirability, of a genuine reconciliation of the conflict between public and private interests.

H.B Acton justifiably views this overcoming of the disparity between the public and private realms with scepticism; however, his central point of contention appears questionable. Acton is correct to note that Marx extolled the ideals of autonomy and self-determination, and that he argued that these traits were precluded under capitalism and only possible in a completely transparent social system, "…under the conscious control of co-operating individuals. His principal aims seem to have been independence, creativity, self-awareness and co-operation" (Acton 1967, pp.125-126). It is also true, and was duly noted by Acton, that with regards to crime Marx emphasised that people's actions are to a large extent shaped by their social circumstances and thus the origins of criminality should be sought in the situations which give rise to it, not as an inherent disposition of 'criminal' individuals. However, Acton considers this approach to be, at best, deeply misguided and this is the foundation of his rejection of Marx's ideal. His criticism is worth quoting at length:

> It is clear that Marx's ideal was that of unrepressed, completely fulfilled individual men. It was an ideal which commended itself to many of the "philosophers" of eighteenth-century France. The difficulty in it, of course, is that some men, if

> unrepressed, would injure other men, and their fulfillment would be at the expense of other men's fulfillment. Professor L. G. Crocker, in his *An Age of Crisis* (1959), points out that this emphasis on self-interest reached its supreme expression in the words and works of the Marquis de Sade who wrote: "Give me a being in the world who by his nature can be exempt of all humanity's ills; not only will that being not feel any kind of pity, he will not be able even to conceive it." Why should not the man who enjoys cruelty perpetrate it? Because, of course, it causes others to suffer unwanted pain. Then the sadist must be held in check and this means rules, laws, morality, punishment, sadists who have to repress their sadism. No doubt Marx believed that no one is naturally a sadist, that it is society alone that makes men cruel. But we do not know that this is so and therefore we do not know what would happen in a society of unrepressed men. Fulfillment is a dangerous as well as a vague ideal. If, as Marx held, the fulfillment must be that of men united together for their common good, then much that individuals would want to do has to be repressed, and we are back with duty and renunciation once more (Acton 1967, pp. 128-129).

What is immediately striking about this passage is the extent to which, as a defence of capitalist institutions, it simply mirrors what Marx finds at fault with them. Acton links Marx's notion of fulfillment with that of complete and unrepressed drives,[17] arguing that the danger inherent in the overthrow of capitalist institutions is that the fulfillment of one individual may come at the expense of another, fulfillment from one perspective equates to injury from another; this situation, of course, is precisely what Marx demonstrates to be an *institutionalised necessity* in capitalist commodity production, not a dark prospect to be avoided by its conservation:

> Under the system of private property… Each person speculates on creating a *new* need in the other, with the aim of forcing him to make a new sacrifice, placing him in

[17] This is an idea that closely resembles Hegel's references to 'arbitrary' or 'capricious' freedom, of which Marx was certainly aware and which seems far removed from his notion of authenticity.

> a new dependence and seducing him into a new kind of *enjoyment* and hence into economic ruin. Each attempts to establish over the other an alien power, in the hope of thereby achieving satisfaction of his own selfish needs (Marx 1992, p. 358).

At best, Acton's line of criticism assumes as fact that people are inclined towards injurious and exploitative actions towards others, an assumption indeed hard to prove with the preclusion of radically alternative social formations, and thus that there is a need for legislation protective of individual rights. This is, however, where Acton's criticism is indeed questionable, and it relates to the liberties taken with his interpretation of Marx's critique of the juridical system.

Acton assumes that by relegating current legal and political institutions, as well as the morality on which they are based, to the ideological superstructure, Marx thereby negates the possibility of them having any authentic foundation at all. However, Marx's point is simply that, insofar as these institutions work to sustain and naturalise exploitative relations of production through the latter's mystification, they are ideological. It is hard to see how the dissolution of these institutions, *as they stand*, would necessarily imply unrestrained instances of sadism, as a prohibition on sadism is in no way related to production or property relations at all. Moreover, it is strange to base a critique of Marx's ideal on primarily moralistic grounds, given that it is precisely the ability to be able to make *authentic* moral choices which guides Marx's theory, and which he maintains to be an impossibility whilst one is in a state of alienation; this point is well made by Fromm:

> For Marx alienation corrupts and perverts all human values. By making economic activities and the values inherent in them, like "gain, work, thrift and sobriety," the supreme value of life, man fails to develop the truly moral values of humanity, "the riches of a good conscience, of virtue, etc., but how can I be virtuous if I am not alive

> and how can I have a good conscience if I am not aware of anything?" In a state of alienation, each sphere of life, the economic and the moral, is independent from the other, "each is concerned upon a specific area of alienated activity and is itself alienated from the other" (Fromm 1962, pp. 49-50).

Although the above remarks may absolve Marx from some arguably unjustified criticisms, there remains the essential difficulty in conceiving of an authentic relation between the individual and the notion of 'collective social labour', such that the private and public spheres are no longer alienated from one another. This difficult reconciliation is likewise at the heart of Hegel's as well as Feuerbach's notion of authenticity. In his *On Voluntary Servitude* Michael Rosen raises the unavoidable question of the precise manner in which this collective subject is supposed to encapsulate and decide upon "…the objective weight to be given to each individual's subjective perception of need…[also taking into account that] opportunities must be given for tastes to develop and change" (Rosen 1996, p. 221). The difficulty here is analogous to that faced by Marx's theory of ideology; in the same manner as the lack of specificity regarding an objective criteria for truth limit the validity of the notion of ideological false consciousness, so too does the ambiguity surrounding the notion of collective social labour make it difficult for a genuine juxtaposition between alienated and unalienated life. Rosen concludes that:

> Just as Hegel leaves it open how it is that the individual comes to identify himself rationally with *Geist* (does everyone have to be a philosopher to recognize himself in it?) so Marx offers no account of how these two subjects – the individual producer and the social *Gesamtarbeiter* – are supposed to communicate with one another[18] (Rosen 1996, p. 222).

[18] One can include the relation of the individual to Feuerbach's *species-being* here.

The nature of a collective subject under a designation such as *culture*, the different ways in which this subject communicates with the individual, and the incisive role of ideology in sustaining this relationship will be explored in chapter 5 in an attempt to formulate a more cohesive theory of ideology. It will be argued that much of the difficulties encountered so far have resulted from the attempt to conceptualise a collective subject as being something internal or inherent to a group, rather than viewing it as a manifestation of communal feeling based upon a collective act of *differentiation* from something posited as *other* or external to the group; this realignment dramatically changes the landscape traversed thus far.

It has been shown that Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx share a motif of transformation: the history of human societies is one of a gradual, though by no means consistently advancing, development. They are about encountering and overcoming various forms of alienation, temporarily hindered by ideologies concerned with stifling or regressing this development, yet nonetheless they involve a necessary trajectory towards a state of authenticity. The assumption in all cases is that the subject of history moves beyond the immediate comprehension of the individuals of whom it is composed of, and that this subject is *rational*. The claim that Marx's theory of ideology is permeated by this motif in no way implies that it ought to be rejected outright; the essential connection between alienation and ideology, for instance, is not affected by this teleological undercurrent; even today, when the topic of ideology is discussed in its myriad forms, the susceptibility of *alienated youths* falling under its sway is widely accepted. The task then is to identify the various factors informing this motif of transformation, for it will be shown that the motif is not a peculiar idiosyncrasy of the three writers under discussion but a popular cultural assumption of the time, in

order to purge the theory of ideology of its bias and identify what remains relevant for further analysis. This will be the purpose of the next chapter.

4 The Ideology Behind The Theory of Ideology

4.1 Concrete Transformations

While it would be a mistake to look for direct causes of the motif of transformation in an analogous manner to the base and superstructure model, given the latter's limitations highlighted in chapter 2, it remains of importance to investigate the concrete transformations which spread across Europe during the period in which Hegel, Feuerbach and the early Marx were writing. It can be no coincidence that the bulk of this body of work emphasising the necessity of progress was composed between the years 1789 and 1848; a period referred to as 'the age of revolution' by Eric Hobsbawm. The unprecedented scope and unforeseeable limits of the technological advancements emanating from the industrial revolution in Britain, combined with the apparent potentiality of Enlightenment ideals to become actual with the example of the French revolution, cannot but have had a profound influence on the writers under discussion. The events of this period are of particular interest in their possibility of giving at least a partial explanation for the three main, though divergent, conclusions drawn from the motif of transformation: the perfectibility of the State in Hegel, humanity's continuous and progressive conquest of limits in Feuerbach, and the inevitability of communism arising from the disintegration of capitalist production in Marx.

The political landscape of the Holy Roman Empire in which Hegel was brought up was one of utter fragmentation, inequality and segregation:

> There was no single law [in the German states of the eighteenth century], …but instead a complex patchwork of legal jurisdictions exercised by rulers, the church, the nobility, guilds, municipalities, and others. Nobles, clergy, burghers, craftsmen, peasants: all enjoyed different rights (rights that were limited and highly specific) and were subject to different jurisdictions, according to the 'estate' to which they belonged (Blackbourn 2003, p. 3).

These vestiges of feudalism were not confined to the German states and were of course antithetical to the liberalism inherent in much Enlightenment thought, of immense popularity among the educated classes in Europe at the time. The initial reception of many abroad to the French revolution, with its maxim of '*liberté, égalité, fraternité',* was thus unsurprisingly one of enthusiasm: "In a very broad sense virtually every person of education, talent and enlightenment sympathised with the Revolution, at all events until the Jacobin dictatorship, and often for very much longer" (Hobsbawm 1996, p. 78). To many observers inside the German states it appeared as both the culmination of a more general movement towards an enlightened cultural and political landscape as well as a signal for the coming of an age without precedence:

> The growth of Enlightenment, the recent recovery of sympathy with the ideals of Greece, the cultural ferment following the *Sturm und Drang* were now capped by the epoch-making events in Paris. It is not surprising that in young minds the spark of hope be kindled that they might see, even bring about a transformation of Germany, a new edition of the Great Age of Athens (Taylor 2005, p. 52).

While the Terror that followed did much to quell this enthusiasm in the German states, and to provoke reactionary tendencies amongst many, there can be no denying that the Napoleonic reforms implemented in the French-occupied German states of the early nineteenth century transformed the cultural landscape quite dramatically.

The reforms differed from state to state and in many cases were limited or incomplete. However, the sheer extent and rapidity of this drive towards modernisation was thoroughly unprecedented. In the Confederation of the Rhine:

> …[t]he French overthrew the existing secular and ecclesiastical princes, abolished the tithe, ended seigneurialism, eliminated guilds, overturned monopolies, nullified privileges, emancipated the Jews, introduced religious toleration, and secularised church lands. Changes in the legal system affected every aspect of life, from marriage and divorce to property rights. These and other changes transformed economy, society and political rule (Blackbourn 2003, p. 54).

Thus the ideal of rebuilding society and the state upon a rational foundation was belatedly enacted in the German States. Hitherto novel ideas such as the rewarding of education and careers based on talent rather than birth became the norm. The most proficient reform movement of the time was arguably that which was undertaken in Prussia between 1807-19 under Stein and Hardenberg, and it is interesting to note that Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* appeared in 1820. The extent, however, to which this work constitutes evidence of Hegel being an apologist for the Prussian state remains a contentious point. Charles Taylor makes note of the important consideration that Hegel did in fact integrate a large amount of precepts from the French revolution in the *Philosophy of Right* that were not adopted in the Prussian reforms (Taylor 2005, p. 73), and this fact, taken in consideration with the strict censorship laws in place at the time, certainly clouds the issue. What can be argued, regardless of any accusations of bias or indirect coercion, is that after 1815 Prussia, as well as Austria, emerged as exemplary models for the modernisation of states in the region of what was then the Holy Roman Empire; and while it seems to be an unqualified exaggeration to regard this as an event of 'world historical' significance, it can be argued at least

retrospectively "…that the Stein-Hardenberg era left its impress not just on Prussia but ultimately on nineteenth-century Germany as a whole" (Blackbourn 2003, p. 62).

Regardless of where the precise locus of change was occurring, there can be no doubt that the dominant philosophy of the turn of the nineteenth century was in many respects reflective of the political upheavals of the time:

> German classical philosophy was…a thoroughly bourgeois phenomenon. All its leading figures (Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Schelling) hailed the French Revolution and indeed remained loyal to it for a considerable time – Hegel championed Napoleon as late as the battle of Jena (1806).[19] The Enlightenment was the framework of Kant's typically eighteenth-century thought, and the starting-point of Hegel's. The philosophy of both was profoundly impregnated with the idea of progress: Kant's first great achievement was to suggest a hypothesis of the origin and development of the solar system, while Hegel's entire philosophy is one of evolution (or, in social terms, historicity) and necessary progress (Hobsbawm 1996, p. 250).

It would perhaps be surprising, however, if this widely held conviction of the necessity of progress was explicable solely as a response to the political events of the time, though when considered in conjunction with the contemporaneous advancements in science and technology this belief must have appeared to be almost ineluctable. Although the effects of the industrial revolution on continental Europe were much delayed, its thorough-going transformation of British society was in many circles viewed as a herald for the new epoch of revolutionary progress:

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[19] This general expectation that philosophy would soon find its culmination in a suitable political order was noted by Nietzsche much later still in 1889; the changing cultural and political landscape of his time (and particularly the rise of German nationalism) led him to react against the idea: "Culture and the state… are antagonists: the 'cultural state' is merely a modern idea. The one lives off the other, the one thrives at the expense of the other. All great cultural epochs are epochs of political decline… Goethe's heart opened up at the phenomenon of Napoleon – it *closed* up to the 'Wars of Liberation'… In the history of European culture the rise of the 'Reich' signifies one thing above all: *a displacement of the centre of gravity.* The fact is known everywhere: in the main thing – and that is still culture – the Germans no longer come into consideration" (TI, "What the Germans Lack," 4).

> …some time in the 1780s, and for the first time in human history, the shackles were taken off the productive power of human societies, which henceforth became capable of the constant, rapid and up to present limitless multiplication of men, goods and services… To ask when…[the Industrial Revolution] was 'complete' is senseless, for its essence was that henceforth revolutionary change became the norm (Hobsbawm 1996, pp. 28-29).

While it is true that the infinite potentialities for the advancement of humanity, to which Feuerbach refers, is an assertion made in explicit connection to his critique of theology, its compatibility with the sentiments of those awed by the progress of technological advancement is striking. Feuerbach's humanism, avowed materialism and faith in the limitless nature of scientific progress can only have been reinforced in such an atmosphere.

The reality of the alienating effects of large-scale industrial production, though speculated upon much earlier, became truly apparent in the 1830s and 40s. The steady rise of displaced and increasingly destitute masses of poor people unable to withstand the sudden transition to the new economy inevitably lead to widespread social unrest. Marx & Engels wrote *The German Ideology* in 1846 and published *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848; the latter work in particular could be viewed as the culmination of commonly held sentiments of a vast number of "…the generation after 1815…[who witnessed a period in which] never in European history and rarely anywhere else, has revolutionism been so endemic, so general, so likely to spread by spontaneous contagion as well as by deliberate propaganda" (Hobsbawm 1996, p. 109). The revolutionary uprisings of 1848 were not, however, reactions against the general consensus of necessary progress, but merely against the direction this progress was taking. The rationalist conception of the inherent value in the mastery of natural

forces remained the dominant ideological position; while some less influential positions, such as those held by many Romantics, were in certain respects reactions against this.

The above may be of some help in explaining the rationale behind this general motif of transformation informing Marx's theory of ideology. There remains the important task of identifying which aspects of this motif exercise an undue or insubstantial influence on the theory, and whether the removal of such aspects can be achieved whilst maintaining coherence.

4.2 The Primacy of Reason and the Organic State

Rosen, in his *On Voluntary Servitude*, convincingly demonstrates that Marx's theory of ideology ultimately rests upon two untenable background beliefs: rationalism and providentialism. He argues that the theory of ideology should be read as an attempted response to a confounding yet legitimate question: "Why do the many accept the rule of the few, even when it seems to be plainly against their interests to do so" (Rosen 1996, p. 1)? The answer given by Marx is that the majority of individuals in unequal societies, though living in a state of objective exploitation, are essentially unaware of their predicament; their genuine interests are effectively masked from them because they perceive the world around them through the prism of ideological false consciousness. The shortcomings of this response have been made clear: if false consciousness is to be properly understood, there must necessarily be a corresponding form of 'true' or 'authentic' consciousness, a standpoint from which one is able to diagnose it, and with regards to defining this standpoint Marx is decidedly vague; the

other flaw relates to the nature of the agent or agents responsible for the manifestation of ideological false consciousness, and I have argued that the conception of an 'economic base' lacks the sufficient autonomy to play this role. Rosen's work is pioneering in that he questions the very foundation presupposed by these problems. Whence does Marx derive the supreme valuation in the emergence of fully autonomous and rational individuals? Is this valuation neutral in an ideological sense? What is the rationale behind the implicit premise "…that societies are *systems*, in the sense that they maintain themselves (or change, as the case may be) in ways that cannot be understood simply from a common-sense individualistic perspective…(Rosen 1996, p. 7)? Does this organic conception entail unsubstantiated teleological assumptions? Finally, if the suppositions above are without foundation, what remains of the theory of ideology?

Insofar as rationalism values an unmediated and authentic perspective on reality it can be agreed that the theory of ideology shares a common conception of the good:

> …the dominant conceptions of human nature to be found in…[Marxism] are rationalist through and through. According to Marxism, society based upon the production of commodities is both exploitative and impersonal: it makes human beings the 'playthings of alien forces' (Rosen 1996, p. 21).

Rosen traces the rationalist disposition back to Plato on the one hand and St Augustine on the other; both writers and the traditions originating from them espoused the primacy of reason over desire, though of course differed in their optimism with regards to the possibility of attaining a purely rational disposition. The role of false consciousness in Marx certainly has parallels with the role played by the Fall in Augustine, severing humanity from its access to God's goodness - God here being synonymous with truth. The supposition that this state of mystification is

transient is common to the rationalists; whether in this life or the next, sin will be overcome, the debasement of humanity to its 'animal functions' is not permanent: "According to Plato, not only is the good knowable, but knowledge, not pleasure, is the highest good" (Rosen 1996, p. 57). What is important to note regarding this rationalist conception is that reason is not only distinct from and superior to desire, but also in constant *tension* with it; the proliferation of the 'passions' directly undermines the development of reason, and so it follows that the passions ought to be curtailed in order to attain the higher good. The passions are an 'alien force', in much the same way as for Marx the society based upon commodity-production is an 'alien force', they must be removed in order to attain the ideal state in which individuals are able to exercise complete and autonomous discretionary power. The disparagement of desire in favour of reason has indeed been criticised by many, particularly those writing from an existential or romantic perspective, but what is of greater significance is whether the two attitudes can genuinely be bifurcated.

Rosen argues that Nietzsche's conception of 'socraticism' in *The Birth of Tragedy* poses a troubling problem for the rationalism endemic to the philosophical tradition inherited by Marx. Nietzsche claims that rationalism springs from a need to impose order and intelligibility on an altogether indifferent world, that it is at bottom a coping mechanism, and if this is accepted it becomes increasingly difficult to talk viably of rationalist conceptions such as 'disinterestedness' and 'objectivity'. Nietzsche's critique is elaborated in *The Gay Science*, in which he argues that the conviction that science necessarily works within a framework devoid of bias or presuppositions is far from self-evident, that in fact it seems more plausible to say the valuation that reason

is pre-eminent is *itself* reflective of a desire of sorts. From where, he asks, does this 'desire for certainty' arise? :

> *To make it possible for…*[science] *to begin*, must there not be some prior conviction – even one that is so commanding and unconditional that it sacrifices all other convictions to itself? We see that science also rests on a faith; there simply is no science 'without presuppositions'. The question whether *truth* is needed must not only have been affirmed in advance, but affirmed to such a degree that the principle, the faith, the conviction finds expression: '*Nothing* is needed *more* than truth, and in relation to it everything else has only second-rate value' (GS 344).

This line of argument has a much broader application than the critique of the purported merits of scientific disciplines; generally applied, it can be inferred that the real problem lies in the attempt to somehow delineate a notion of the 'subject' over and above particular drives and desires, that any such attempt can ultimately be deconstructed and shown to involve the very things it seeks to eliminate. With regards to Marx, it appears that the ideal of the 'autonomous subject' is in need of some clarification. Insofar as Marx's critique focuses on the curtailment and alienation from the potentialities needed for the development of subjecthood, his work remains relatively unscathed by the anti-rationalist critique, as Marx ensures that his conception of genuine subjecthood will be a result of authentic praxis and development, a cumulative process rather than a static ideal. On the other hand, the notion of 'authentic praxis and development' as a prerequisite foundation for self-actualisation does entail a similarly abstruse approach to that undertaken in the rationalist tendency to conceive of reason in the abstract. In both cases, the possibility of these foundational states is simply presupposed.

The rationalist undercurrents of Marx's thought are most clearly exemplified in the passages in which ideology is linked with false consciousness, as an inverted perception of the 'real world'. The following is a good example, and one that also contains elements of the 'providentialism' examined below:

> This state and this society produce religion, which is an *inverted consciousness of the world*, because they are an *inverted world*… It is the *fantastic realization* of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality… The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand for their *real* happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to *call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions*. The criticism of religion is therefore in *embryo* the *criticism of that vale of tears* of which religion is the *halo*… It is therefore the *task of history*, once the *other-world of truth* has vanished, to establish the *truth of this world* (Marx 1992, p. 244).

The concept of false consciousness is too malleable and indeterminate; on the one hand it can be read as a quite natural response to a false, i.e. alienated, world, and on the other hand it can be seen as that which manifests and sustains such a world, overall it seems to cloud the issue of agency rather than explicate it. The aesthetic approach to ideology discussed in the next chapter will do much to alleviate these difficulties; following the work of Althusser, ideology can be better understood as an affective rather than a cognitive phenomenon. As Eagleton argues, an ideological position can be either true or false, whether it accurately represents an empirical reality is quite irrelevant to the claim that it is ideological; rather, what matters is the sentiment or intent of the speaker, the way in which a particular position functions to reinforce one's sense of identity and, on a societal level, the role it plays in the formation of 'lived relations' with others. It will be argued that this approach is far less susceptible to the problems associated with the rationalist tradition.

Closely connected with the rationalist presuppositions of Marx's theory of ideology is the influence of a providential outlook. Rosen argues that in the eighteenth century there emerged

> …[b]oth the belief that societies are entities that preserve themselves by shaping the individuals and institutions of which they are composed and the belief that history is a process in which 'nations stumble upon establishments, which are indeed the result of human action, but not the execution of any human design' (Rosen 1996, p. 101).

This organic conception is clearly evident in Marx's base and superstructure model of ideology, and implicit in much of his work. The belief is formulated by Rosen in the manner of 'unintended consequences': the actions of individuals within a society serve a role over and above what can be intended or predicted by the actors themselves, but the wider significance of these actions can be understood when comprehended through a superior perspective. Rosen's work demonstrates that the two contemporary explanations for what gives this perspective – "that actions have a wider significance as part of a progressive process of historical development [and]…that action should be interpreted from the perspective of society, treated as a self-maintaining entity" (Rosen 1996, pp. 101-102) – emerged through a complex development of the notion that "…the actions of individuals should be seen providentially, as the realization of the Divine Will" (Rosen 1996, p. 101). Many of the incommensurable aspects of Marx's theory examined thus far, particularly the problematic relation between the individual and collective social labour, can in part be read as a result of his adoption of the belief that society can be treated as a self-maintaining entity within a wider context of progressive historical development. Marx does not take into consideration the historically specific nature of this belief, its connection to a tradition with questionable foundations. Objective spirit in Hegel,

species being in Feuerbach and collective social labour in Marx are all symptoms of the teleology inherent in this providential conception of historical development. It will be shown that, in the aesthetic approach to the theory of ideology, the emphasis on the construction of the figure of the 'Other' as a method of binding individuals into a whole does away with the problematic dichotomies that result from the providential tradition.

The influence of rationalism and providentialism on Marx's theory, and the existence of alternative explanations to the problems addressed by the theory of ideology, leads Rosen to conclude along the same lines as Barth: "Thus the theory of ideology – a theory that was presented as an objective attempt to understand the nature of beliefs held for non-rational reasons – can be seen as a part of the phenomenon that it purports to explain" (Rosen 1996, p. 272). Despite this, Rosen rightly maintains that the problems the theory attempts to explain are themselves important and worthy of consideration. I argue that the traditional theory of ideology is quite right in its critique of the nature of certain ideological conceptions to do with authenticity and universality, in highlighting the duplicitous manner in which such conceptions can actually function to sustain material conditions of alienation. It only becomes entangled in the phenomenon it seeks to explain when it goes on to assume that such misrepresentation implies the substantive, or concrete, existence of such notions, or at least their potential actualisation in an unadulterated form. The benefit of isolating the ideological presuppositions informing the theory of ideology is that it becomes clear that such entanglement does not have to follow from the core principles of the theory itself. It is primarily in the adoption of the rationalist ideal of autonomous subjects exercising complete discretionary power that the problematic distinction between

‘non-ideological’ and ‘ideological’ subjects emerges from the theory; in a like manner, it is in the adoption of the organicism of the providential tradition that the relation between the individual and the ‘collective subject’ embodied in ideology becomes problematic, particularly in the subsequent difficulty of describing how ideology can be said to ‘determine’ individuals. In the following chapter it will be argued that with an aesthetic approach, such as that undertaken by Eagleton and Žižek, it is possible to develop a conception of ideology that is free of these presuppositions. Notions like authenticity, universality and reconciliation will still be shown to be intimately connected with ideology; however, they will be shown to be intrinsic to the phenomenon itself, and not things to be contrasted with it.

5 The Aesthetic Turn

5.1 Between Subjectivity and Objectivity

I have shown that, without serious amendments, the problematic relation between subject and object is further obscured by the theory of ideology developed by Marx. Ideology has been variously defined as a mechanism responsible for the organisation of a set of social relations arising from the more or less autonomous development of the productive forces, which are primary; it has also been defined as the deciding factor through which a particular class is able to suppress or to rebel against other classes with conflicting interests, and to ultimately ascend to and maintain a hegemonic position. Most importantly, ideology has generally been conceived in a pejorative sense, with the assumption that those under its sway fundamentally misperceive the determining factors behind their actions and/or beliefs. It has been argued that the combination of these elements cannot be integrated into a single coherent theory, that doing so invariably results in the unaccountability of the precise nature of the individual subject's relation to the 'whole' (whether that be 'class', 'society', 'economic base' or whatever objective formation deemed pertinent to the theory). These limitations and others have been summarised as follows:

> 'Ideology' is variously argued to be too vague and/or all-inclusive as a social-theoretical notion; to have been superseded in later modern societies (in whatever relevance it had); and/or to depend on an implausible notion of socio-political Truth or objective 'outside', against which ideologies' imputed 'falsity' could be measured (Sharpe 2006, p. 95).

In the article from which the above excerpt is taken, Sharpe convincingly demonstrates that the reformulated approach to the theory of ideology undertaken by

Eagleton and Žižek, with their respective emphases on 'the beautiful' and 'the sublime', opens the possibility for an aesthetic understanding of ideology in which much of the problematic aspects of Marx's theory could potentially be overcome.

Perhaps the most significant problem of ideology encountered so far has been in formulating the way in which the perspectives of individuals could be manipulated in certain fundamental respects by external forces without severely undermining the generally accepted principle of autonomy regarding the subject – if 'ideology' is the external cause of a set of actions/beliefs, then the extent to which one is ideologically determined is the extent to which one is effectively an automaton. However, conceptualising ideology in a like manner as one would conceive an aesthetic object could potentially dissolve this problematic subject-object dichotomy; for, as with the field of aesthetics, the meaningful content of the (ideological) object cannot be grasped without the intentional intervention of the subject, though this of course in no way diminishes the necessity of the object – here the subject-object relationship is reciprocal with regards to the concurrence of meaning. It will be argued that situating ideology in the interstices between subjectivity and objectivity does much to account for the manner in which ideology can be said to 'determine' individuals. As Sharpe notes, the genesis of the aesthetic turn in Eagleton and Žižek can be found in the work of Louis Althusser – so the first task is to investigate how Althusser's notion of the 'interpellation of the subject' opened up new avenues for the possible ways in which ideology can be said to function.

5.2 The Interpellation of the Subject in Althusser

"In order to grasp what follows, it is essential to realize that both he who is writing these lines and the reader who reads them are themselves subjects, and therefore ideological subjects (a tautological proposition), i.e. that the author and the reader of these lines both live 'spontaneously' or 'naturally' in ideology in the sense in which I have said that 'man is an ideological animal by nature'" (Althusser 2001, p. 116).

The above passage must be read carefully as it includes both the potential for developments in the theory of ideology as well as the potential for serious limitations. First, the positive aspects: it has been argued that Marx inherited a humanist conception of authenticity from Feuerbach, a notion exemplified in the idea of 'collective social labour'. For Althusser, there is no longer a need to explain the way in which an individual identifies/communicates with this collective subject, in the sense that there is no dichotomy here between 'authentic subject' on the one hand and 'ideological identification' on the other: there is no 'subject' prior to 'ideological identification', the two instances emerge simultaneously and cannot be differentiated. This reduction of the status of the subject to the ideological appears to do away with the problematic presupposition of 'objective knowledge' as a test and measure for instances of 'ideological mystification' – presuming that knowledge must be preceded by a subject, it would seem to follow that the influence of ideology must be in a certain sense ubiquitous.[20] This leads to what can only appear on a first reading to be

[20] This is not the conclusion arrived at by Althusser himself who, like Marx, maintains a conception of scientific knowledge as distinct from ideology in general: "Marx founds a new science, i.e. he elaborates a system of new scientific concepts where previously there prevailed only the manipulation of ideological notions. Marx founds the science of history where there were previously only philosophies of history…before Marx, two continents *only* had been opened up to scientific knowledge by sustained epistemological breaks: the *continent of Mathematics* with the Greeks (by Thales or those designated by that mythical name) and the *continent of Physics* (by Galileo and his successors)" (Althusser 2001, pp. 21-22).

a serious limitation in the Althusserian theory of ideology, as Sharpe has pointed out, this line of reasoning is indeed vulnerable to accusations of being too 'all-inclusive as a social-theoretical notion' to be of any use. The propositions that 'man is an ideological animal by nature', that one is 'always-already' a subject, appear to be simply non-falsifiable and so unhelpful in breaking away from the limitations encountered in the theory of ideology thus far. Nonetheless, I wish to argue that Althusser's strict anti-humanism can and should be tempered with an aesthetic conception of a decentred, yet active, subject; that with slight revisions Althusser's theories of interpellation and ideological State apparatuses do represent an important advance in the theory of ideology.

Althusser begins his treatment on ideology with an important modification to the Marxist theory of the State. He notes that the standard formulation has been first to claim that the State can be defined as the repressive State apparatus; 'State power' must be distinguished from the State apparatus (the mechanism through which the former is exercised), as State power can change hands and represent different interests without modifying the State apparatus; 'class struggle' is primarily concerned with the seizure of State power, by a class or alliance of classes, in order to implement their class objectives through the consequent control of the State apparatus; finally, it is the imperative of the proletariat to seize State power, in order to first replace the existing State apparatus with a proletarian State apparatus, with the eventual goal of the radical dissolution of the State, i.e. every State apparatus and State power as such. Althusser accepts the distinction between State power and State apparatus but argues that a further distinction is needed within the State apparatus itself. He maintains that

the repressive State apparatus (RSA) can, preliminarily,[21] be identified as the unity of institutions including the Government, Administration, Army, Police, Courts and Prisons – institutions which function primarily by 'violence', "…at least ultimately (since repression, e.g. administrative repression, may take nonphysical forms)" (Althusser 2001, p. 96). However, Althusser argues that the exercise of State power would not be possible in a purely repressive form of State apparatus, that any effective RSA must be supplemented with what he terms 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (ISAs).

Unlike the composition of the RSA, the institutions representing the ISAs appear relatively autonomous and distinct from one another. Althusser presents the following as a preliminary empirical list:

- the religious ISA (the system of the different Churches),
- the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private 'Schools'),
- the family ISA,
- the legal ISA,
- the political ISA (the political system, including the different Parties),
- the trade union ISA,
- the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.),
- the cultural ISA (Literature, the Arts, sports, etc.) (Althusser 2001, p. 96).

Althusser of course accepts the obvious rebuke that the RSA and ISAs cannot be neatly demarcated, noting that some, such as the family ISA, serve other functions and others, such as the legal ISA and arguably the political ISA, also belong to the RSA. Despite this he maintains that there are important differences between the RSA

[21] It is important to note that Althusser did not present his theses on ideology in completed form: "I should like to venture a first and very schematic outline of such a theory [of ideology]. The theses I am about to put forward are certainly not off the cuff, but they cannot be sustained and tested, i.e. confirmed or rejected, except by much thorough study and analysis" (Althusser 2001, p. 107).

and the ISAs, over and above the fact that there is one RSA and a plurality of ISAs. Firstly, there is a distinction between public and private domains; the RSA belongs to the public domain whereas most of what comprises the ISAs can be considered to belong to the private domain. Anticipating the objection that what belongs to the private domain cannot also belong to the 'State' apparatus, Althusser argues that "…[i]t is unimportant whether the institutions in which they are realized are 'public' or 'private'. What matters is how they function. Private institutions can perfectly well 'function' as Ideological State Apparatuses. A reasonably thorough analysis of any one of the ISAs proves it" (Althusser 2001, p. 97). The general argument here is that insofar as the ISAs all work to produce, or rather reproduce, subjects with attitudes, habits and customs commensurable to the interests of the State, they can be said to belong to the State apparatus. The primary difference, then, between the RSA and the ISAs is that the former functions predominantly by violence and the latter functions predominantly by ideology. It is important to note that Althusser maintains that there is no such thing as a 'purely' repressive apparatus *or* a 'purely' ideological apparatus, each utilises the predominant aspect of the other as a secondary or supportive function:

> For example, the Army and the Police also function by ideology both to ensure their own cohesion and reproduction, and in the 'values' they propound externally…[the ISAs] also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic… Thus Schools and Churches use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to 'discipline' not only their shepherds, but also their flocks. The same is true of the Family… The same is true of the cultural IS Apparatus (censorship, among other things), etc. (Althusser 2001, p. 98).

Given the necessary interplay between the RSA and ISAs, as well as Althusser's dictum that no class can maintain or reproduce the use of State power without effective control of the ISAs, we can make the observation that the more subtle, the less obvious, are the instances of repression functioning in the ISAs, the more hegemonic and secure are the interests of the class or classes in control of State power. Thus the importance of the ideological field is clear:

> …the Ideological State Apparatuses may be not only the *stake*, but also the *site* of class struggle, and often of bitter forms of class struggle. [Because]…[t]he class (or class alliance) in power cannot lay down the law in the ISAs as easily as it can in the (repressive) State apparatus (Althusser 2001, p. 99).

For while the appropriation of State power through the seizure of the RSA may be quick and decisive, it can only be short-lived without the subsequent reproduction of the relations of production which underlie it; and such reproductions cannot be achieved without what Althusser terms the ideological interpellation of individuals as subjects.

The primary function of ideology, manifest in the ideological State apparatuses, is thus the reproduction of the relations of production. The question remains as to the means by which this is accomplished; precisely what is the nature of the relation between individuals and ideology? Althusser proposes two theses by way of explanation: "*Thesis I: Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence"* (Althusser 2001, p. 109) and "*Thesis II: Ideology has a material existence*" (Althusser 2001, p. 112). Thesis I represents a slight divergence from the approach that Marx adopted from Feuerbach. *The German Ideology* proposed that ideology represented a mystified, or alienated, conception of authentic conditions of existence; the cause of this conception lies in the fact that the

actual conditions of existence are themselves alienating, thus in order for this to be sustained 'authentic' conditions of existence must be projected in ideology – either as a potentiality inherent in the actual conditions of existence, or more commonly, as with religious ideologies, as a state to be attained in a transcendent existence. The obvious flaw in this conception is the space left open regarding how one comes to formulate and identify with a mystified representation of authentic conditions that are necessarily *absent* from one's *actual* conditions. Who or what is causally responsible for such a projection? Althusser's thesis is beneficial in that it disposes of this problem of causation:

> [I]t is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there…it is necessary to advance the thesis that it is the *imaginary nature of this relation* which underlies all the distortion that we can observe (if we do not live in its truth) in all ideology …What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live (Althusser 2001, p. 111).

Although this thesis has advantages over those propounded in *The German Ideology*, it could arguably be accused of relying on circular reasoning: ideology represents an imaginary relation to one's real conditions of existence. Why? Because one's real conditions of existence are regulated through an identification with the ideological State apparatuses. Althusser's approach becomes more meaningful against the backdrop of thesis II, so this criticism can be put aside for the moment. For now it is important to note the radical transformation of the status of *alienation* entailed here. For Marx, the ideological subject is necessarily an alienated subject – ideological conceptions are born of the estrangement entailed in alienated labour and class

stratification, essentially as an explanation or justification for this alienation. Here the opposite holds true: the ideological subject does not feel alienated from his or her actual conditions of existence – on the contrary the more one 'feels at home', the more one identifies oneself as belonging to the ISAs, i.e. the less alienated, the more successful ideological interpellation is. The two approaches agree on the same general tendency of ideology to create a sense of self-identification with the external, though while Marx holds this to be an illusory effect, Althusser argues it to be very real, for he insists that ideology has a material existence.

The materiality of ideology follows from Althusser's insistence that ideology is always realised in and through an apparatus. It seems non-controversial to claim that one's ideas, particularly one's 'ideological' ideas, if this distinction can be made, always imply a corresponding action – indeed Althusser claims that it is an essential aspect of 'the ideological representation of ideology' that one

> …must '*act* according to his ideas'…Indeed, if he does not do what he ought to do as a function of what he believes, it is because he does something else, which, still as a function of the same idealist scheme, implies that he has other ideas in his head as well as those he proclaims, and that he acts according to these other ideas, as a man who is either 'inconsistent'…or cynical, or perverse…the 'ideas' of a human subject exist in his actions, or ought to exist in his actions… (Althusser 2001, pp. 113-114).

This 'ideological' expectation that one ought to act according to one's ideas is sustained by the fact that these ideas have correlative rituals and practices embodied in the ISAs. These rituals and practices are of course exceedingly numerous and diverse, ranging from obvious examples such as the material practices of worship and ethical commitments implied by a belief in God, to more subtle instances such as the proper rituals and practices associated with notions of civility and good manners.

Althusser follows Pascal here, these ideas, certainly supportive of and indispensible to the ISAs, are themselves, in the last determination, a product of the ISAs; they have no autonomous or 'ideal' existence of their own: "ideology…[exists] in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices governed by a material ritual, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject acting in all consciousness according to his belief" (Althusser 2001, p. 115). The problem of circularity reappears here: the ISAs cannot function without subjects willingly adopting and identifying with the ideas that underlie them; but the possibility of adopting and identifying with ideas is itself dependent on their corresponding existence within a material ISA. Thus a person is simultaneously a free subject *and* a subjected being. To make sense of this counter-intuitive notion Althusser introduces the concept of 'ideological interpellation'.

The mechanism of ideological interpellation is equated with instances of being 'hailed'. Althusser gives the example of an individual being hailed on the street – 'hey, you there!' – the consequent recognition from the hailed individual that this call was addressed to him or her, the spontaneity or obviousness of this recognition is, Althusser maintains, an ideological effect, 'the elementary ideological effect':

> [W]hat thus seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it. That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical *denegation* of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, 'I am ideological.'… (Althusser 2001, p. 118).

The way in which ideology functioning in the ISAs hails or interpellates individuals is reliant upon the recognition of themselves as 'subjects', ideology always addresses

itself to subjects and, because we 'always-already' are subjects, this hailing is almost always successful. To demonstrate that this is not so much a temporal process, but rather in a sense an omnipresent reality, Althusser refers to the Freudian analysis of the expectation of a birth:

> Everyone knows how much and in what way an unborn child is expected. Which amounts to saying, very prosaically, if we agree to drop the 'sentiments', i.e. the forms of family ideology (paternal/maternal/ conjugal/fraternal) in which the unborn child is expected: it is certain in advance that it will bear its Father's Name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable. Before its birth, the child is therefore always-already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration in which it is 'expected' once it has been conceived (Althusser 2001, p. 119).

Althusser's claim is that, to varying degrees, all the ISAs contain this feature through which certain expectations are in a sense imposed upon individuals as subjects, that this imposition succeeds because individuals recognise themselves as the intended 'subject' of these expectations; thus in a retroactive movement one recognises oneself as being 'always-already' a subject.

However, if ideological interpellation is conceived as a blanket process encompassing all aspects of human nature, it then appears to be not only non-verifiable but also intuitively implausible. Althusser's reference to humanity being an 'ideological animal by nature' does seem to point in this direction and invites the following criticism from E.P. Thompson:

> …behind Althusser's grotesque notion of ideological 'interpellation' or 'hailing' we find even more *chic* notions of men and women (*except*, of course, select intellectuals) not thinking or acting, but being *thought* and being *performed*. All these

> exalted thinkers, 'bourgeois' or 'Marxist', proceed from the same 'latent anthropology', the same ulterior assumption about 'Man' – that all men and women (except themselves) *are bloody silly* (Thompson 1995, pp. 199-200).

The attempt to disassociate ambiguous notions such as 'human nature', 'authenticity' and 'essence' from the theory of ideology is an understandable and, I would argue, a necessary endeavour; Marx's failure to account for such notions when implying that ideology can be equated with 'false consciousness' is a fundamental deadlock in the theory. Thompson is correct to argue, though, that sweeping these notions under the umbrella of ideology does nothing to remove the ambiguity – we simply move from ideology in juxtaposition to an unspecified authentic 'other' to a concept of ideology *itself* that exhibits aspects of this unspecified 'otherness' (i.e. 'class struggle' as the determining factor in the last instance). I would argue, however, that Althusser's theory has the potential of dissociating itself from these ambiguous notions without having to negate or subsume them – that human nature, authenticity and essence may or may not exist, and that this problem has nothing to do with the existence of ideology. I think that Althusser's reference to 'bad subjects' could point towards this:

> …the subjects 'work', they 'work by themselves' in the vast majority of cases, with the exception of the 'bad subjects' who on occasion provoke the intervention of one of the detachments of the (repressive) State apparatus. But the vast majority of (good) subjects work alright 'all by themselves', i.e. by ideology (whose concrete forms are realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses) (Althusser 2001, p. 123).

The need for this occasional intervention from the RSA can only mean that ideological interpellation does not have a uniform effect upon everyone, that the extent to which one is interpellated will vary in degree and, possibly, that it may fail entirely. This variability surely implies that there is a surplus dimension to personhood over and above the 'ideological interpellation of individuals as subjects';

further, I would argue that the supposition of a surplus – and it need only remain a supposition, simply the assumption that ideological interpellation is 'not-all' – is necessary for any meaningful discussion on ideology.

One other limitation in Althusser's theory pertains to the fact that it remains, albeit in a refined form, a version of the base/superstructure model of ideology with concurrent problems regarding the viability of having different 'levels' of determination. In an attempt to avoid this problematic Althusser makes the claim that the superstructure is not simply an effect of the economic base but rather has a material existence of its own, that in the last instance it has *only* a material existence, and thus is relatively autonomous and in turn capable of a level of effectivity with regards to the base. It is unclear, though, whether this signifies a genuine advancement over the original base/superstructure model, as the fundamentally *passive* nature of the individual remains the same in both instances. It seems, then, that the way out of this problem is to renege on the exclusive materiality of ideology, and this is the direction taken by Žižek:

> When Althusser claims that ideology interpellates individuals into subjects, 'individuals' stand here for the living beings on which a *dispositif* of ISAs works, imposing on them a network of micro-practices, while the 'subject' is *not* a category of living being, of substance, but the result of these living beings being caught in an ISA *dispositif* (or in a symbolic order). Where Althusser falls short is in his disappointing and misplaced insistence on the 'materiality' of the ISA: the primordial form of *dispositif*, the 'big Other' of the symbolic institution, is precisely immaterial, a virtual order… (Žižek 2013, pp. 984-985)

This is not to deny Althusser's insistence on the fundamental importance of ideology manifesting in material rituals and practices. However, in arguing that a central aspect

of it is immaterial or virtual, Žižek is able account for the active engagement of individuals in the field of ideology. He further argues that the effectiveness of the material ISAs is to a certain extent reliant upon this immateriality: whereas Althusser must always posit the pre-existence of the material arm of the State apparatuses in order to sustain the ideological – Žižek refers here to Althusser's imputation of the existence of the armed forces or gold reserves (amongst other examples) functioning as a necessary 'background' guarantee of State power – Žižek maintains that the *actual* or material existence of such guarantees are of secondary importance; it is enough that one *believes* in their existence in order to establish the desired ideological effect; what follows from this belief in the imagined potency of the symbolic order (or superstructure) are the reproduction of material rituals and practices commensurable to it; if the instances of State power, existing in the individual mind as a potentiality, are *actually* displayed, this can have the paradoxical effect of weakening them:

> [T]he 'little piece of the real' (the armed force, gold reserves) that can remain in the background since it can perform its function even without being used, indeed can fulfil that function *even if it does not exist at all*…not only does it not need to exist in reality, if it did appear and directly intervene in reality, then it would risk losing its power…[it] is thus a spectral entity…a father who is perceived as 'omnipotent' can only sustain this position if his power remains forever a 'potential', a threat which is never actualized. The full use of force, painful as it might be, makes it part of reality and as such by definition limited" (Žižek 2014, p. 54).

The reference to gold reserves indicates that this situation is not limited to instances of direct repression; the transition from the material to the virtual in the emergence of digital economies does nothing to lessen the effectiveness of the monetary system – on the contrary it works to endow a currency with a sort of limitless omnipresence and thereby strengthens its relation to the material practices of individuals. This leads

Žižek to argue for a more expansive conception of materialism than that which is deployed by Althusser:

> [N]ot only the 'priority of being over consciousness', in the traditional Marxist sense that ideas are grounded in the material social and productive process, and not only the material (ideological) apparatuses that sustain ideology, but also the immanent materiality of the ideal order itself (Žižek 2014, pp. 55-56).

This notion of 'the immanent materiality of the ideal order itself' is essential for the possibility of an *active* component of the ideological subject; a component which allows for the possibility of one's imaginary/symbolic identifications to be confirmed, reformulated or even denied – for the 'power' of ideology here resides within the individual subject, to the precise extent that one's ideal order is confirmed by or conforms to one's material rituals and practices. This leads back to the idea that there are differences in the degree to which individuals are interpellated as subjects and, what follows, that some may be more susceptible to ideology than others. In order to develop this argument further the work of Eagleton needs to be addressed, for his analysis of the nature or process of ideological identification is highly relevant.

5.3 Eagleton via Kant: Ideology and Aesthetic Judgments

For Eagleton the mechanism of ideological interpellation can be conceived along the same lines as the formative process of aesthetic judgments developed by Kant. This is not to say that ideology is necessarily aesthetic, or that all aesthetics is ideological – rather the feeling of pleasure associated with the contemplation of 'the beautiful', and the assumed grounds for this feeling, is said to be illustrative of the way in which successful ideological interpellation functions; that it accounts for the assumed

'obviousness' or 'disinterestedness' of ideological judgments, and for the way in which ideology is able to manifest a sense of homogeneity amongst people with otherwise disparate interests. In addition, by equating ideological interpellation with judgments of taste, Eagleton can account for the active component of the ideological subject – for though Kant holds that judgment is an inherent cognitive faculty, it is not one that develops in a uniform manner:

> It may be a matter of uncertainty whether a person who thinks he is laying down a judgment of taste is, in fact, judging in conformity with that idea; but that this idea is what is contemplated in his judgment, and that, consequently, it is meant to be a judgment of taste, is proclaimed by his use of the expression 'beauty' (Kant 2007, p. 47).

For Kant a sense of taste needs to be *cultivated* in order for the possibility of purely aesthetic judgments to be made – so as to divorce them from the influence of that which may be simply 'agreeable', or gratifying to the senses, and that which may be simply 'good', of objective practical worth. Similarly the ISAs may be said to *cultivate* a sense of subjecthood in individuals, and if the analogy holds this would entail a level of self-referential discourse for the identification of drives and/or desires in tension with the ideological 'ideal' – the strength of a particular ideology is then measured by its effects, the extent to which individuals willingly suppress or disavow those tendencies identified as falling outside the sphere of ideological interpellation.

Eagleton regards the aesthetic in Kant as an archetypal example of the possibility of a 'non-alienated' object; the evocation of notions of beauty or the sublime from the contemplation of certain phenomena is one that is grounded in intuition, establishing an immediate sense of relatedness between perceiver and perceived. The spontaneous consensus amongst different individuals who judge this or that object to be an

instance of beauty or the sublime is thus the grounds for the possibility of a form of 'intersubjectivity' which may be otherwise lacking:

> …establishing ourselves as a community of feeling subjects linked by a quick sense of our shared capacities… For the alarming truth is that in a social order marked by class division and market competition, it may finally be here, and only here, that human beings belong together in some intimate *Gemeinschaft*. At the level of theoretical discourse, we know one another only as objects; at the level of morality, we know and respect each other as autonomous subjects, but can have no concept of what this means… In the sphere of aesthetic culture, however, we can experience our shared humanity with all the immediacy of our response to a fine painting or magnificent symphony. Paradoxically, it is in the apparently most private, frail and intangible aspects of our lives that we blend most harmoniously with one another (Eagleton 1990, pp. 75-76).

This common sense is grounded in the perception of the aesthetic object. Eagleton notes, however, that it is no way representative of the object itself – the 'beautiful' describes a subjective state, a 'universal subjectivity' to the extent that this judgment forms a consensus – it is rather indifferent to the objective nature of the object itself. It is in this sense that Eagleton argues that aesthetics and ideology share a common logic.

The significance of aesthetic judgments pertains to their ability to establish common values independent of any objective or concrete actualities; and this is a function which ideology must be able to fulfil in order to establish a sense of social solidarity, a function which becomes increasingly important in proportion to the extent to which a society tends towards the atomisation of its subjects. Eagleton argues that Kant's dismissal of the possibility of deriving values from facts, of the transition from 'is' to

'ought', is grounded in the recognition that the practices underlying modern societies are inimical to the formation of societal identification, thus the unification of subject and State must be established on a higher, conceptual level: "Values do not flow from facts, in the sense that ideologies are intended not simply to reflect existing social behaviour, but to mystify and legitimate it" (Eagleton 1990, p. 82). However, as noted, it is implausible for this conceptual identification to be constructed and maintained if what is represented by it are conditions and values that are fundamentally absent from one's actual conditions of living. Thus Eagleton argues that the Kantian moral law is, from an ideological perspective, quite ineffective in its exhortation that reason alone is sufficient for such valuations:

> It is a fiction, this moral law, a hypothesis which we must construct in order to act as rational creatures at all, yet an entity of which the world yields no trace of evidence. The Kantian moral law is a fetish; and as such it is a poor basis for human solidarity, which is precisely its ideological paucity (Eagleton 1990, p. 83).

If, on the other hand, an ideological configuration is able to engage individuals on an aesthetic level, then this dislocation can be overcome.

The aesthetic establishes a sense of purposiveness for the external in which natural objects appear uniquely suited or even designed for our imaginative faculties; this apparent synthesis between two otherwise alienated positions is what needs to occur for the possibility of successful ideological interpellation:

> That things are conveniently fashioned for our purposes must remain a hypothesis; but it is the kind of heuristic fiction which permits us a sense of purposiveness, centredness and significance, and thus one which is of the very essence of the ideological (Eagleton 1990, p. 85).

Eagleton argues that this 'heuristic fiction' of centredness and significance is precisely the end result of the process of 'hailing' functioning in the ISAs, another example of the aesthetic nature of ideology. The primary function of the ISAs is the reproduction of the relations of production underlying a given society,

> …but it cannot succeed…unless those individuals are permitted the illusion that the world 'hails' them, shows some regard for their faculties, addresses itself to them as one subject to another, and it is this fiction which ideology for Althusser exists to foster (Eagleton 1990, p. 88).

Thus the centring of the subject aroused by aesthetic judgments of the beautiful can be seen as being equivalent to the centredness entailed in the recognition of oneself as the subject hailed in the process of ideological interpellation; they both create a sense of 'being-at-home' in the world, a self-identification in complete contrast to any instances of objective alienation. However, as Eagleton notes, such unencumbered harmony, if taken to the extreme, would likely lead to a self-satisfied and inactive populace at odds with political expedience. In the same way as the ISAs are supplemented with the RSA, Kant's analytic of the beautiful is supplemented with an analytic of the sublime, apprehension of which appears to, "…contravene the ends of our power of judgment, to be ill-adapted to our faculty of presentation, and to do violence, as it were, to the imagination, and yet it is judged all the more sublime on that account" (Kant 2007, p. 76). Eagleton detects an analogous dialectic of centring and de-centring subjects in the interplay between the ISAs and the RSA, effecting an often precarious balancing act in which freedom and self-identification are reconciled with submission and conformity.

Aesthetic judgments for Kant are supposed to be simultaneously subjective and universal. Eagleton notes that this entails a level of duplicity in their grammatical form:

> To claim that you are sublime is not for me to identify some property in you but to report on some feeling in myself. Judgments of taste appear to be descriptions of the world but are in fact concealed emotive utterances, performatives masquerading as constatives (Eagleton 1990, p. 93).

The difficulty, as Eagleton sees it, is that the concealment of the emotional/performative aspects of such judgments is accomplished on an almost unconscious level; he argues that it is not possible to simply remove ideological influence by translating statements of the form 'x is sublime' into 'I like x' – the very nature of the subjectivity conceived to be operative in aesthetic judgments is one of pure disinterestedness, removed of all personal opinion, belief and inclination – a subjective feeling of such self-evidence so as to preclude disputation. A primary function of aesthetic judgments, Eagleton maintains, is their effect of re-conceptualising one's lived relation to the world as being a characterisation of the world itself, and in this sense they are strictly homologous to the 'hailing' entailed in ideological interpellation. Thus Eagleton argues that ideology should not be assessed with regards to the truth or falsity of a given proposition, rather one should seek to determine what sort of social configurations are promoted or denigrated by the discourse, what relation should be drawn between its implicit premises and the distribution/reproduction of State power, and this relation is oftentimes a very subtle and attenuated one:

> Ideology does indeed importantly contain many false propositions, such as the claim that Asians are inferior to Europeans or that the Queen of England is highly intelligent; but the falsity of such claims is not what is peculiarly ideological about

> them, since not all false propositions are ideological and not all ideological statements are false. What makes such false claims ideological is the *motivation* of their falsity: the fact that they encode emotive attitudes relevant to the reproduction of social power. The same is true of the many ideological utterances which happen to be true… [Ideology] is a matter of wishing, cursing, fearing, reverencing, desiring, denigrating and so on – *performative* discourse… (Eagleton 1990, p. 94).

By defining ideology as a performative discourse Eagleton's reformulation is compatible with the idea that there may be differences in the extent to which individuals are interpellated as subjects; the effect of ideology on the reproduction of the relations of production will be the same regardless of whether individuals are completely interpellated and identify aesthetically with the ideology functioning in the ISAs, or if such notions are simply espoused cynically in pursuance of one's interests. The myriad of possible dispositions in between will presumably be determined by the extent to which the antagonisms internal to a social order are mystified/naturalised, or conversely, the extent to which they work to disrupt feelings of social harmony, and this in turn would differ from person to person depending on the level of subjective alienation experienced. Thus Althusser is quite correct to claim that the ideological field is both the 'stake' as well as the 'site' of class struggle.

The aesthetic, then, is a powerful source of social harmony, an apparently pure and immediate foundation for solidarity based upon shared feelings of intersubjectivity aroused by the seemingly universal apprehension of instances of 'the beautiful' and 'the sublime', a foundation for what Kant considers to be a 'sensus communis'. Recognition of this common sense is thus a shield against alienation, an illustration of the way in which one can be said to recognise oneself as 'always-already' a subject in respect to ideological interpellation. Eagleton importantly adds that, insofar as the two

examples are analogous, the perceived *universality* of this subjective recognition has the effect of dissociating it from any and all of the subject's opinions and beliefs acknowledged to be 'subjective' in a personal sense, and garnishes the position with the status of genuine neutrality. Thus ideology appears to the subject of interpellation as its very opposite, a position completely neutral with regards to personal interests and a genuine reconciliation between subject and object:

> …[The aesthetic] thus offers an ideological paradigm for both individual subject and social order – for the aesthetic representation is a *society*, in which each constituent component is the condition of the purposive existence of every other, and finds in that felicitous totality the ground of its own identity (Eagleton 1990, p. 99).

Insofar as Kant's analytic of the beautiful can be read as a paradigm for the ideological conception of the non-alienated and harmonious relation between subject and society, it would seem, then, to be ill-suited to account for the more insidious aspects of ideological discourse, the forms of 'cursing', 'fearing', 'desiring' and 'denigrating' to which Eagleton refers to. Here Sharpe's analysis is beneficial because he points out that by assuming the functioning of the ISAs can be equated with Kant's analytic of the beautiful, and that of the RSA with Kant's analytic of the sublime, these antithetical dispositions of ideological interpellation may be overlooked. But by emphasising the role of the sublime in ideological identification itself, not as a supplement or corrective to potential deviations from interpellation, Žižek's approach may be able to account for this apparent discrepancy.

Sharpe notes that for Žižek there is always an 'indivisible remainder' to ideological subjectification, an excess which is on the one hand unable to be incorporated into the ideology itself, but on the other hand necessary for it to effectively function: an 'ideological fantasy' that,

> …(1) (re-)narrates the (violent) *historical* emergence of the present socio-political order, and (2) provides a semantic framework situating this order *viz-à-viz* its synchronic 'outside' (other nations, political foes, and points of internal or 'symptomatic' rupture within its consensual fabric (Sharpe 2006, p. 108).

Ideological interpellation is never *total* because no ideology is entirely self-sufficient, for anything to be sanctioned by or included in an ideology there is always, at least implicitly, a reference to that which is to be excluded or prohibited. It is in virtue of this latter, 'sublime' otherness, that ideology possesses its importance, meaning and attraction – for if a *sensus communis* were truly universal there would be no need for ideology. The conception of the 'Other' thus plays an important role in ideological cohesion, and in an important sense the internal homogeneity of a group is defined by what is external to it, thus the 'Other' has the strange function of being that which is both incapable of being assimilated into the ideological edifice, as well as being a real and defined *threat* to the stability of the edifice. Therefore the inconsistent status of the ideological 'Other' is in fact key to the consistency of ideology:

> What is decisive about the ideological positing of a malign external enemy, Žižek argues, is how it *functions* within a political community to externalise the causes of any manifest dissonances that arise in this polity's *sensus communis*. The political 'gain' associated with this archetypal ideological device is then, as Žižek explains, how it allows representatives of the ideology to foreclose the possibility that any such 'symptomatic' *internal* divisions are structurally immanent to the existing political regime. All such sources of internal crisis can rather be re-signified in advance as *contingent* to the regime… They are thus reinscribed as in principle *removable* without any fundamental structural change (Sharpe 2006, p. 115).

It seems, then, that ideology needs to be investigated with respect to both its 'beautiful' and 'sublime' aspects, in order to identify and distinguish between what

may be positive and what may be negative in a given ideological configuration. This tension between the beautiful and the sublime is also reflective of Althusser's emphasis on 'struggle' as being ever present within the field of ideology.

The most obvious instances of the malevolent potential of ideology can be seen in those groups in which the overt denigration of the 'Other' is in-itself a foundation for a sense of solidarity, in which the perceived attributes of an external group are themselves a positive referent through which the ideology unifies its subjects in a purely negative relation to its self-defined 'outside'. The immeasurably long and ongoing history of ideologically based discrimination and repression attests to this. It may seem, then, that if ideology is to dispose of this dangerous potential it must disavow any and all negative conceptions of the 'Other', that harmony can be attained and sustained through a discourse of tolerance and the embracing of a multitude of differences. The idea of tolerance as a unifying principle is relatively recent; indeed it has even been argued that the implementation of the principle of tolerance is itself representative of a shift towards a form of 'post-ideological' discourse:

> Ideology was considered distinct from a pluralist, free, tolerant and rational society where 'politics' takes place. Writers as diverse as Ralph Dahrendorf, J L Talmon, Bernard Crick, Hannah Arendt and Karl Popper, in their different ways, all spoke of 'totalising ideologies' and closed societies (fascism and communism), as distinct from tolerant civil politics and open societies. Ideology, in this reading, becomes an intolerant and limited perspective in comparison to forms of non-ideological, open and tolerant politics. In this total context it was therefore argued that ideology had ended in advanced, industrialised democratic societies (Saksena 2009, p. 67).

However, as Wendy Brown has argued, this notion of the 'end of ideology' is a little premature, as things are a little more complicated. The problem has nothing to do

with tolerance *per se*, but rather with the call for tolerance as being the initial and foundational moment for political discourse, for as Brown notes:

> Almost all objects of tolerance are marked as deviant, marginal, or undesirable by virtue of being tolerated, and the action of tolerance inevitably affords some access to superiority, even as settings or dynamics of mutual tolerance may complicate renderings of superordination and superiority as matters of relatively fixed status (Brown 2008, p. 14).

In addition to any implicit renderings of superordination and superiority, there is also the essential problem that if tolerance and acceptance of differences is to be universalised as the ideological/political foundation of a society, then these differences themselves cannot have any role in the public sphere in regards to the functioning of the State. The analysis of Hegel and Marx has shown that the distinction between the public and private spheres is much more tenuous than is often appreciated and, by way of advancement, Brown's analysis demonstrates that the incorporation of a plurality of differences into an ideological configuration can only be achieved if these differences are essentially 'de-politicised'. Given the ambiguous relation between the public and private spheres, this de-politicisation inevitably leads to conflict between groups for whom certain issues are a matter of public rights, and for others must be relegated to the sphere of private differences. The way in which the discourse of tolerance attempts to resolve this fractured harmony is decidedly similar to the ideological mechanisms from which it was supposed to be a departure:

> Depoliticization involves construing inequality, subordination, marginalization, and social conflict, which all require political analysis and political solutions, as personal and individual, on the one hand, or as natural, religious, or cultural on the other…Tolerance as it is commonly used today tends to cast instances of inequality or social injury as matters of individual or group prejudice. And it tends to cast group

> conflict as rooted in ontologically natural hostility toward essentialized religious, ethnic, or cultural difference (Brown 2008, p. 15).

In claiming that apparently 'post-ideological' discourses such as the discourse of tolerance do in fact share common features with ideology in its overt forms, it is certainly not my intention to equate the two in an ethical sense; the actual or concrete experiences of individuals interpellated as subjects will of course vary from ideology to ideology, and it is conceivable that the value of particular ideologies could be assessed in regards to their negative and/or positive effects. Brown's analysis is important in that she successfully highlights a concealed level of cultural bias operating in an ostensibly neutral liberal-democratic discourse; and is as such a perfect example of successful ideology. In order to undertake a thorough examination, ideology needs to be identified and analysed in all its forms, particularly when it is most surreptitious. Here the work of Žižek is significant as he is able to establish certain tools essential for the diagnosis and critique of ideology in a nominally post-ideological landscape.

5.4 The Critique of Ideology in Žižek

"…beyond the fiction of reality, there is the reality of the fiction" (Žižek 2013, p. 4).

For Žižek the discipline of psychoanalysis is essential for understanding the dialectic of the beautiful and the sublime inherent in ideology: ideological interpellation has the structure of fantasy, a construct that both arises from and covers up the inherent inconsistencies/antagonisms of the symbolic order; the ideological fantasy, the 'beautiful', is sustained through an act of transference, whereby there is a disavowal of the sources of these inconsistencies/antagonisms and a displacement locating them

in the conception of a 'sublime' Other. Žižek completes the aesthetic turn in the theory of ideology, explicating how ideology effectively de-centres the subject while simultaneously demonstrating the subject's active engagement in this process.

Žižek begins his treatment on ideology by contesting what appears to follow from the cynical distance individuals commonly maintain from the State apparatuses. This cynical attitude, often considered to have been exacerbated by the events of 1968 and arguably made more pronounced following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the thawing of the Cold War, gives rise to a situation in which the ideological pronouncements of the hegemonic powers are no longer taken seriously, no one really 'believes' in them. This situation appears to contradict a central assumption of traditional ideology critique, namely that ideology enables the reproduction of the relations of production by mystifying or naturalising the forces underlying them; here the majority of people are no longer convinced of the authenticity of grand ideological causes, of the legitimacy of ideological universals such as 'Freedom', 'Justice' and 'Equality', and tacitly assume varying degrees of self-interest and structural exploitation to be the natural underpinning of the superstructure; and yet despite the prevalence of this cynical disposition towards ideology, the reproduction of the relations of production continues unabashedly and un-perturbed. What appears to follow, then, is that the Marxist tradition has greatly over-estimated the significance ideology has for the functioning of the State. It is here, though, where Žižek disagrees, and makes use of Sloterdijk's distinction between *kynicism* and *cynicism* to develop an interesting counter-argument. Sloterdijk associates *kynicism* with the long and often fruitfully subversive tradition established by Diogenes, namely the use of satire, irony and sarcasm to playfully undermine the professed solemnity of the ideals

espoused by the ruling classes, to create a shift in public opinion from naïve acceptance to outright rejection by highlighting the inconsistent and often hypocritical function these ideals have in society. Modern *cynicism*, though related, lacks entirely this subversive aspect. Sloterdijk defines it somewhat paradoxically as follows:

> Cynicism is *enlightened false consciousness*. It is that modernized, unhappy consciousness, on which enlightenment has labored both successfully and in vain. It has learned its lessons in enlightenment, but it has not, and probably was not able to, put them into practice. Well-off and miserable at the same time, this consciousness no longer feels affected by any critique of ideology; its falseness is already reflexively buffered (Sloterdijk 2010, p. 5).

Ideology critique is no longer effective as it appears that there is no longer anything to 'unmask', indeed the underlying intentions behind the very process of unmasking are themselves vulnerable to a cynical suspicion. The pervasiveness of this cynical attitude is reflected in the ease with which it can be incorporated into the dominant cultural discourse. As Žižek puts it:

> Cynicism is the answer of the ruling culture to this kynical subversion: it recognizes, it takes into account, the particular interest behind the ideological universality, the distance between the ideological mask and the reality, but it still finds reasons to retain the mask. This cynicism is not a direct position of immorality, it is more like morality itself put in the service of immorality – the model of cynical wisdom is to conceive probity, integrity, as a supreme form of dishonesty, and morals as a supreme form of profligacy, the truth as the most effective form of a lie. This cynicism is therefore a kind of perverted 'negation of the negation' of the official ideology… (Žižek 2008, p. 26).

This cynical 'openness' has in no way undermined the material effects of the ideological superstructure, and this leads Žižek to propose a contemporary reformulation of an old Marxist standard, no longer – 'sie wissen das nicht, aber sie

tun es' – the situation is rather that people are well aware of how things are, and yet continue to act *as if* they did not know. Žižek, however, argues that this does not signal a move towards a form of 'post-ideology'; rather, what is needed is a revision of the traditional methods of ideology critique. Following Althusser he maintains that the 'illusions' of ideology do not pertain to knowledge but to the illusions which structure our social activity, our effective relation to reality as such. The 'distance' evoked by cynicism is not a new phenomenon; as argued, ideological interpellation can never be total, thus an effective ideological formation must be flexible enough so as to allow its subjects to situate themselves both inside and outside of the edifice; cynicism, then, can be read as an extremely effective mechanism for achieving this.

Žižek's analysis of cynicism allows for a more sophisticated conception of the relation between belief and ideology. Belief, in this regard, is not to be conceived psychologically, it is not simply or essentially a 'mental state'. Again following Althusser, Žižek insists that beliefs are always materialised in social activity; thus even if particular beliefs are disavowed, so long as they are embodied or 'played out', the disavowal has no practical efficacy. Žižek's argument actually has stronger implications; it would appear that our social activity is structured by beliefs and practices that do not have a necessary or consistent correspondence with our subjective convictions:

> …belief supports the fantasy which regulates social reality…What we call 'social reality' is in the last resort an ethical construction; it is supported by a certain *as if* (we act *as if* we believe in the almightiness of bureaucracy, *as if* the President incarnates the Will of the People, *as if* the Party expresses the objective interest of the working class…). As soon as the belief…is lost, the very texture of the social field disintegrates (Žižek 2008, pp. 33-34).

Thus this unacknowledged 'as if' actually functions in a far more predominant manner than 'belief', traditionally conceived, could, and what is typically overlooked, perhaps necessarily, is this tenuous foundation – the 'fantastic', 'fictitious' or 'illusory' nature of the beliefs and practices, without which our concrete social activity as a whole cannot function. Ideology is therefore situated on the side of praxis, the ideological illusion being the way in which we relate to this praxis:

> The illusion is therefore double: it consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality. And this overlooked, unconscious illusion is what may be called the *ideological fantasy*…Cynical distance is just one way – one of many ways – to blind ourselves to the structuring power of ideological fantasy: even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, *we are still doing them* (Žižek 2008, p. 30).

On the surface cynicism may be read as a realist refutation of the naïve organicism implied by the aesthetic interpellation of the subject, however, this reading overlooks their common logic: both positions enable the avoidance of a direct confrontation with the structural fantasy we unconsciously participate in, a fantasy which exerts a far greater influence on our social activity than any intimately held 'beliefs', feelings or opinions.

If it is unnecessary for the rules and regulations which govern our social activity to be grounded in any positively defined, agreed upon, principles, Žižek argues that it must follow that obedience to the Law is grounded, tautologically, in the enunciation of the Law itself. The effectiveness of the Law would be variable and limited if it were to be followed only insofar as it concurred with our subjective conceptions of justice, indeed it would entail a shift of authority from the external to the internal and the dissolution of the Law itself: "It follows, from this constitutively senseless character

of the Law, that we must obey it not because it is just, good or even beneficial, but simply *because it is the law*…" (Žižek 2008, p. 35). Žižek argues that genuine obedience must therefore be 'external', maintained at a distance; total identification with the Law would not be sustainable, invariably leading to disillusionment and dissatisfaction the more one encounters inconsistent material representations of one's subjective ideals. In order to explain the way in which the subject of ideological interpellation adopts the groundless injunctions of the Law, without becoming mired in self-contradiction, Žižek refers to the analogous function operative of the superego:

> This is the fundamental feature of the psychoanalytic concept of the *superego*: an injunction which is experienced as traumatic, 'senseless' – that is, which cannot be integrated into the symbolic universe of the subject. But for the Law to function 'normally', this traumatic fact that 'custom is the whole of equity for the sole reason that it is accepted' – the dependence of the Law on its process of enunciation…must be repressed into the unconscious, through the ideological, imaginary experience of the 'meaning' of the Law, of its foundation in Justice, Truth (or, in a modern way, functionality) (Žižek 2008, pp. 35-36).

How is this 'repression into the unconscious' achieved? It becomes clear that ideology does not function *in spite* of the distance assumed by its subjects, but rather *because of it*. For the hypothetical figure of complete ideological interpellation, the trauma of confronting the senseless, superegoic foundation of the ideological edifice leads directly to the disintegration of his or her subjective identity, and so indirectly, to the weakening of the ideological edifice's structural efficacy. For those who maintain a critical distance, however, this confrontation can be perpetually deferred. Thus ideology, to be sustainable, requires the tacit approval of certain sentiments and practices which may fall outside the 'official' dogma, avenues and outlets through which a sense of subjectivity can be developed in contradistinction to any

inconsistencies that may be encountered through an identification with the superstructure. Precisely what is tacitly deemed to be acceptable and what remains prohibited is, of course, variable, and so is an interesting point of reference when comparing different ideological formations. As a way of illustrating the necessity of this subjective 'distance' Žižek refers to Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* and the experiences of its two central characters: Private 'Gomer Pyle' Lawrence, initially unable to comply with the superegoic demands of military basic training and consequently the victim of severe hazing, attempts to redefine himself through an over-identification with the 'ideal' military subject; this leads to his complete mental breakdown, murder of the drill sergeant and suicide. Private Davis, on the other hand, undergoes his military basic training and deployment to Vietnam with an ironic distance, fulfilling the actions required without assuming a direct subjective identification with them. The film ends with Davis shooting a wounded Vietcong sniper girl:

> …[Davis] is the one in whom the interpellation by the military big Other has fully succeeded; he is the fully constituted military subject. The lesson is therefore clear: an ideological identification exerts a true hold on us precisely when we maintain an awareness that we are not fully identical to it, that there is a rich human person beneath it: 'not all is ideology, beneath the ideological mask, I am also a human person' is *the very form of ideology*, of its 'practical efficiency'…[it is] not that there is no ideology without a trans-ideological 'authentic' kernel but rather, that *it is only the reference to such a trans-ideological kernel which makes an ideology 'workable'* (Žižek 1997, p. 21).

Žižek detects the same ironic distance on display with the characters of the TV show *MASH*, characters who outwardly mock and detach themselves from the official pro-war rhetoric, and yet perform their tasks with the utmost efficiency, contributing to

the continuation of the military apparatus. It could be argued that this case is much more ambiguous, given the characters' overarching ethical obligations defined in the Hippocratic oath. In any case, it serves as a good example of the contradictions that can arise from the position of being both inside and outside of an ideological edifice; where carrying out one's duty to do no harm and cure indiscriminately can indirectly help to sustain the conditions one seeks to prevent.

It would, of course, be insufficient for ideological interpellation to function solely on the tacit proviso that it does not encroach too much onto the individual's sense of subjective identity; the active engagement of the subject requires more. Here Žižek introduces a factor typically ignored by traditional ideology critique, the role of *enjoyment* in ideological interpellation. Žižek identifies the superego as having a twofold relation to ideology, on the one hand it is representative of the characteristically 'senseless' injunctions of the Law, yet on the other hand it is defined as that which intervenes in order to mask or sustain this 'senselessness'. According to Žižek, the connection between superego and ideology is manifest in the frequent supplement of an 'obscene', 'nightly' or 'libidinal' Law underscoring the officially proclaimed 'public' Law. This is a set of transgressions explicitly prohibited yet covertly encouraged, ideological *enjoyment* as a buffer against the inherent fallibility of ideological *meaning*:

> …[The] splitting of the law into the written public Law and its underside, the 'unwritten', obscene secret code…[comes from] the incomplete, 'non-all' character of the public Law: explicit, public rules do not suffice, so they have to be supplemented by a clandestine 'unwritten' code aimed at those who, although they violate no public rules, maintain a kind of inner distance and do not truly identify with the 'spirit of community' (Žižek 2005, pp. 54-55).

This lack of identification with the 'spirit of community' is a much more potent cause for social ostracisation than a lack of identification with the public Law, and thus the unwritten precepts governing the enjoyable 'underside' of the Law can be seen as the real glue which determines social cohesion. To return to *Full Metal Jacket*, Private Davis' apparent dissociation from the public Law governing the military apparatus is explicable if we assume his unconscious identification with its 'superego underside', the enjoyment factor underlying it – it is this factor which Private 'Gomer Pyle' Lawrence is never able to identify with, and the attempt at total assimilation with the public Law supported by it is not enough to compensate for this.

It is, however, a result of the peculiarly amorphous nature of ideological enjoyment that, in order to be sustained, it needs to refer back to ideological meaning; 'ideology for ideology's sake' would be a difficult organisational principle to implement. And yet ideological meaning is itself inchoate and in need of a foundation, so at first it appears that ideological interpellation requires an incessant to-and-fro between its two complimentary aspects; however, this is not necessarily the case. A recurrent notion in Žižek's work is the idea that one of the most effective forms of belief is the supposition that, regardless of my personal position, there exists 'someone supposed to believe' – the 'meaning' of ideological meaning is sustained through reference to this projected figure. As an elementary example Žižek refers to the tradition surrounding the figure of Father Christmas: the parent stages the ritual of belief for the benefit of the child, the one 'supposed to believe'; more interesting is the case in which the child no longer believes, yet maintains the outward position of innocent belief for the benefit of the parent, the one 'supposed to believe in his or her belief' – here the entire ritual of belief is sustained through reciprocal projections on to the

'other'. Žižek maintains that, to varying degrees, ideological meaning always relies upon such configurations, and it is obvious that cynical distance does not preclude this. Yet why is it the case that such intricate social relations are needed for ideology to function, or rather why is it necessary for its underside, ideological enjoyment, to be repressed? Here some clarification is needed. The English word *enjoyment* does not sufficiently encapsulate what Žižek has in mind – Žižek often uses the French term *jouissance*, particularly emphasising its role in Lacanian theory: "…for Lacan the term…[jouissance] entails an essential excess, a lack of balanced satisfaction, derived from the pleasurable dissatisfaction of never reaching the object of one's desire" (Sheehan 2012, p. 33). One can now see the difficulty in identifying with the underside of ideology: it conjures up the impression of a blind drive towards an unattainable goal, the enjoyment of a hamster wheel rather than pleasurable satisfaction. Ideological meaning, approached directly or from a distance, masks the conditions which sustain it – there is no ideological meaning without ideological enjoyment, and yet there can be no enjoyment without the 'illusion' of meaning – direct proximity to either pole can potentially destroy the whole ideological edifice. This leads to what Žižek terms the 'fundamental ideological paradox':

> What is really at stake in ideology is its form, the fact that we continue to walk as straight as we can in one direction…the ideological subjects, 'travellers lost in a forest', must conceal from themselves the fact that 'it was possibly chance alone that first determined them in their choice'; they must believe that their decision is well founded, that it will lead to their Goal. As soon as they perceive that *the real goal is the consistency of the ideological attitude itself*, the effect is self-defeating… Why must this inversion of the relation of aim and means remain hidden, why is its revelation self-defeating? Because it would reveal the enjoyment which is at work in ideology, in the ideological renunciation itself. In other words, it would reveal that

> ideology serves only its own purpose, that it does not serve anything – which is precisely the Lacanian definition of *jouissance* (Žižek 2008, p. 92).

It has been argued that ideological enjoyment is a relatively stable feature across various and differing ideological formations, it follows that the specific identity of a given ideology is to be located on the side of meaning. To this end Žižek introduces another psychoanalytic notion relevant to the critique of ideology, the Lacanian *point de capiton*. It is argued that each ideological formation consists of a set of relatively autonomous 'free floating signifiers'; in order to unify them ideological meaning requires the intervention of the *point de capiton*, a 'nodal point' which retroactively gives meaning to the whole by situating the set of signifiers as a series of equivalences, a series totalised in virtue of their reference to itself:

> If we 'quilt' the floating signifiers through 'Communism', for example, 'class struggle' confers a precise and fixed signification to all other elements: to democracy (so-called 'real democracy' as opposed to 'bourgeois formal democracy' as a legal form of exploitation); to feminism (the exploitation of women as resulting from the class-conditioned division of labour); to ecologism (the destruction of natural resources as a logical consequence of profit-orientated capitalist production); to the peace movement (the principal danger to peace is adventuristic imperialism), and so on (Žižek 2008, p. 96).

The existence of a nodal point is essential for explicating the apparently inconsistent fact that radically opposed ideologies can and at times do employ the same language to justify the implementation of vastly divergent means; it also helps to explain the particularly arduous nature of the task of settling ideological disputes, for Žižek's point is that in reality these signifiers do not have any inherent positive content that could remain the same in all circumstances, they can only remain 'fixed' within the

wider framework established through the nodal point. The same ambiguity holds for the nodal point itself, it has no more *inherent* meaning than the signifiers it unifies, its primacy pertains purely to its functional role within the set: "…[It is] the word to which 'things' themselves refer to recognize themselves in their unity" (Žižek 2008, p. 105). Thus Žižek can demonstrate how there is no contradiction in contemporary debates between social democrats and neo-conservatives in which both sides distinguish themselves as being on the side of 'Freedom', the word simply has a different meaning depending on the ideological constellation it refers to. Given the 'trans-ideological' nature of the free-floating signifiers it is immediately apparent that the nodal point needs to be distinguished in order to ascertain the precise meaning or identity of a given ideology: "The first task of the analysis is therefore to isolate, in a given ideological field, the particular struggle which at the same time determines the horizon of its totality…" (Žižek 2008, p. 97). Emphasising the role of the nodal point in ideology critique also helps to distinguish ideology proper from political rhetoric as a means to populist ends, as the lack of a coherent set of equivalences would be indicative of a fundamentally hollow ideology.

To return now to the dialectic of the beautiful and the sublime; the ideological conception of the beautiful can be associated with fantasy insofar as it is representative of an organic social body in which all its parts complement one another to form a unified whole; this conception represents a constitutional impossibility as it does not permit of any antagonisms within the social field and yet antagonisms palpably exist. Thus in order to sustain the fantasy antagonisms need to be displaced, there can be no ideological conception of the beautiful without the supplement of the sublime. Žižek defines the 'sublime object of ideology' as being a spectral entity as it

is devoid of any positive ontological consistency – it is a projection, the embodiment of various internal antagonisms condensed in a single source, a source that must be 'foreign' to the social body if the fantasy of the beautiful is to be sustained. Given that the sublime object is the displaced embodiment of disparate antagonisms, its constitutive make-up is invariably contradictory – for Žižek the supreme example is to be found in the attributes of the anti-Semitic figure of the Jew:

> The anti-Semitic figure of the Jew takes from the great capitalists their wealth and social control, from the hedonists sexual debauchery, from commercialized popular culture and the yellow press their vulgarity, from the lower classes their filth and bad smell, from intellectuals their corrupted sophistry, *and from Jews their name* (Žižek 2009, p. 318).

To reiterate Sharpe's observation, the function of the sublime is to re-interpret what are in reality the inherent limits or deadlocks of a society as being instances of outside *corruption* and so capable of being removed without any structural change. The sublime represents an unfulfillable desire, the non-existence of the 'beautiful' society is not an impediment to the idea's affectivity so long as its existence in the imagination can be sustained with the assumption that the 'Other' is responsible for preventing its fruition, or is in possession of it itself, or indeed both. In this sense the attributes of the sublime object directly coincide with the unconscious desires of the ideological subject. This conception is in accordance with one of the key tenets of the early Frankfurt School's analysis of Nazi-era anti-Semitism:

> In the image of the Jew which the racial nationalists hold up before the world they express their own essence. Their craving is for exclusive ownership, appropriation, unlimited power, and at any price. The Jew, burdened with his tormentors' guilt, mocked as their lord, they nail to the cross, endlessly repeating a sacrifice in whose power they are unable to believe (Horkheimer & Adorno 1987, pp. 137-138).

Given the cataclysmically inhumane consequences that have followed from an ideologically skewered conception of the sublime, its importance for ideology critique is self-evident – for Žižek the formula is as follows: "to detect, in a given ideological edifice, the element which represents within it its own impossibility" (Žižek 2008, p. 143).

From the investigation above it can be seen that key aspects of Althusser's theses on ideology could be workable given the important qualification regarding the exclusive materiality of ideology: it is true that ideology must at some point manifest itself in material rituals and practices, the absence of this would make it indistinguishable from subjective opinion and renew the epistemic difficulties regarding a standard of truth; to this, however, there needs to be added the latent capacities of the subject, the 'immanent materiality of the ideal' to use Žižek's phrase, in the process of ideological interpellation and re/formulation. To deny this potentiality leads to a problem of circularity when attempting to define the causal determinants of the ideological subject; in addition, such an approach would have to assume what is an intuitively implausible *uniformity* of dispositions amongst such subjects. Incorporating aspects of aesthetic and psychoanalytic theory into the notion of ideology helps to avoid the extremes of both the idealist and materialist approaches. It is clear then that a combination of the work of Althusser, Eagleton and Žižek is of great benefit for renewed attempts at the identification, classification and subsequent critique of ideology.

6 Ideology in Practice

6.1 The Problem of Determination

The previous chapter argued the case for what may at first appear to be an implausible notion: the possibility of a subject who is at once ideological and autonomous. Advances made in the theory of ideology by virtue of an appeal to aesthetics and psychoanalysis are clear – the troubling dichotomy between false consciousness and its elusive opposite is no longer relevant. Although the aesthetic turn represents a sophisticated representation of the nature of ideological consciousness, and of the effect of ideology on the processes of individual subjectification and identity formation, it also poses some problems as to the way in which ideology functions on a wider societal level. Despite Althusser's breakthroughs, his insistence that ideology serves the primary function of the reproduction of the relations of production cannot but appear to contradict another of his central theses, the 'relative autonomy' of the ideological superstructure. This contradiction speaks to the wider problematic of determination within the Marxist tradition, in which individuals and classes are simultaneously determined by the economic base as well as being actively engaged in class struggle – the base's reproduction or transformation. These apparent instances of economic reductionism are not only problematic with regards to autonomy; in addition it can be argued that such an approach fails to explain the role of ideology in all of its forms: "It leaves no room for non-class ideologies such as racism and sexism; and even in class terms it is drastically reductive. The political, religious and other ideologies of a society are not exhausted by their functions within economic life" (Eagleton 2007, p. 148). Of course, it should not be assumed that discarding the

base/superstructure model equates to denying a role for ideology in the reproduction of the relations of production; Eagleton's point is rather that, given there are instances of ideology irreducible to the economic (and vice versa) it follows that the two are 'relatively autonomous' (in a much more drastic sense than that proposed by Althusser). The practical efficacy of ideology, its broader function, must then be sought elsewhere.

The ramifications of the problem of determination stemming from an Althusserian theory of ideology are succinctly stated as follows:

> …[E]ither we have basically economistic forms of analysis in which politics is reduced to class interests or we have to analyse power relations and political forces without prejudice. A possible implication of the latter is that such analyses may extend beyond the limits of a Marxist problematic (Smart 1985, p. 29).

The reduction of politics and ideology to the expression of class interests determined by the economy is simply incompatible with the conception of ideology developed thus far; however, the need to extend analysis beyond the limits of a Marxist problematic need not be considered a limitation. The issue of economic determination and human agency does not necessarily relate to a theory of ideology as such. As Smart notes elsewhere, it can be argued that the problem of determination is rather a result of a tendency within the Marxist tradition to conceive of almost all phenomena as being relatable to the general schema of political economy:

> …[I]n so far as Marxist analysis has developed, broadly speaking, within the conceptual framework of political economy, then determination has been conceptualised as in the final instance 'economic'. In consequence, Marxist analyses have tended to conceptualise phenomena in terms of either a direct or an indirect relationship of economic determination (Smart 1985, p. 22).

If it is accepted that this tendency exists it follows that a break from the confines of a purely Marxist framework can only serve to advance the legitimacy of a theory of ideology.

In an article concerning the uncertainty of the future relevance of ideology McCarthy argues that it is primarily the reformulations provided by Althusser and Foucault that signify the concept's enduring importance:

> …[E]ach offered to social theory a vision that burst the confines of ideology's location. Ideology was no longer housed in the bourgeoisie's collective being or in its structures of wealth and labor. Ideology was dispersed throughout a 'social order.' …Today's ideologies originate neither in a solid economic base nor in the region of class politics, but in a new environment of symbolic and hegemonic forms (McCarthy 1994, p. 416).

While I maintain some reservations about the extent to which Althusser's work has broken with the traditional conception of ideology's location, at least in terms of its practical function as a means of class struggle, it will be argued in this chapter that the work of Foucault allows for a comprehensive and internally consistent analysis of social structures that are compatible with the notion of ideology outlined in chapter 5. Key to this reconciliation will be the shift in Foucault from a juridical to a relational conception of power – the former, it will be argued, has often served as an ideological distortion contained within the theory of ideology itself, resulting in the contradiction posed by the problem of determination.

It may of course be objected that the attempt to synthesise aspects of Foucault's work with an aesthetic/psychoanalytic approach to ideology such as Žižek's is problematic. Unlike Foucault, Žižek does remain faithful to a Universalist conception of Truth, that

of the Lacanian 'Real' which discloses itself in the various inconsistencies, breakdowns and symptoms of symbolic orders: "Psychoanalysis, …[for Žižek], is concerned with truth, not meaning, and the truth is often that there is no meaning, that structures of meaning are themselves fantasies" (Harpham 2003, p. 465);

> "Even if the object of desire is an illusory lure, *there is a real in this illusion*: the object of desire in its positive nature is vain, *but not the place it occupies*, the place of the Real, which is why there is more truth in unconditional fidelity to one's desire than in a resigned insight into the vanity of one's striving" (Žižek 2011, p. 72).

It must be acknowledged that in this regard the two thinkers are representative of divergent philosophical traditions, as Foucault eschews any notion of absolute truth. It is important to note, however, that Žižek's Truth is a negative one, the contention that the category of subject is constitutive of a *lack*, of an inherent disjointedness that emerges upon our entry into the symbolic orders of language and culture, a disparity that engenders incessant recourse to the frameworks of ideological fantasy. I would argue, then, that it is a Truth that is not so at odds with the major contention of Foucault, namely that the assumption that it is possible to delineate a positive conception of the subject as something stable and objective is an illusion, that any such effort can actually be read as an expression of finite and historically contingent relations of power. Foucault's main target is the construction of the subject as epitomised in the humanist tradition, and this construction is similarly dismissed in the approach taken by Žižek. With this in mind, I will argue that Foucault's ambivalence towards universal conceptions of truth or subjectivity does not preclude the fact that, in certain key respects, his work is both compatible with and supportive of the aesthetic/psychoanalytic approach, and that it is capable of enriching the approach with significant insights into the material effects of ideology.

6.2 The Symbiosis of Power and Knowledge

"It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power" (Foucault 1980, p. 52).

In an interview with Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino Foucault identifies what he believes to be three fundamental flaws with the theory of ideology. Given that the current objective is to demonstrate the compatibility of Foucault's overall project with a refined theory of ideology, it is first necessary to address these objections, which are as follows:

> The notion of ideology appears to me to be difficult to make use of, for three reasons. The first is that, like it or not, it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth…The second drawback is that the concept of ideology refers, I think necessarily, to something of the order of a subject. Thirdly, ideology stands in a secondary position relative to something which functions as its infrastructure, as its material, economic determinate, etc. For these three reasons, I think that this is a notion that cannot be used without circumspection (Foucault 1980, p. 118).

As previously argued, it should not be assumed that non-ideological and ideological perspectives stand in a relation to each other of truth and falsity; empirically, an ideological perspective can be true or false. 'Reification' better encapsulates the status of ideology, insofar as it often conceals certain emotional or performative judgments within an apparently neutral framework, obscuring the relation of such judgments to the reproduction of social power. As Eagleton has argued, ideology involves 'reconceptualising one's lived relations to the world as being a characterisation of the world itself'. 'Reification' also encapsulates the advances made by Žižek, the notion

that ideology 'both arises from and covers up the inherent inconsistencies/antagonisms of the social-symbolic order', and that it involves a repressed form of enjoyment entailed in the power of its form over its content. Defined in this way, I would argue that there is no need to posit some sort of standard of truth in order to make sense of ideology. Foucault's second objection, regarding the reference to 'something of the order of a subject', appears more difficult to refute; however, if the problem of the necessary positing of a subject relates to the theory of ideology as defined by Marx, as implying a necessary correlative in the ambiguous form of 'human nature', 'authenticity' or 'essence' then, as argued, this may be overcome. This conception of a pure subject in opposition to ideological distortion appears to be what Foucault has in mind in the following passage from *Discipline and Punish*, of which he is understandably dismissive:

> …[L]et there be no misunderstanding: it is not that a real man, the object of knowledge, philosophical reflection or technical intervention, has been substituted for the soul, the illusion of the theologians. The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself (Foucault 1991, p. 30).

A precise conceptualisation of what constitutes a subject is indeed difficult to define; however, I maintain that this problem is only peculiar to a theory of ideology if it is assumed that ideological interpellation is 'total', and complete ideological interpellation is impossible to reconcile with the notion of ideology outlined in chapter 5. For instance, phenomena such as ideological enjoyment and cynical distance require that subjects are able to situate themselves both inside and outside of an ideological edifice. I would argue that the troubling matter of what constitutes, in Žižek's terms – this 'non-ideological kernel' of the subject – is in fact a problem applicable to most Western philosophical traditions associated with a form of

foundationalism and not distinct to a theory of ideology. Foucault's third objection, though, is impossible to dismiss and ironically enough I wish to argue that the way ahead lies in an accommodation of the work of Foucault himself.

Foucault's work demonstrates that the problem of determination for a theory of ideology actually arises from the general theory of power at work in most Marxist analyses. He argues that this Marxist conception of power shares a fundamental commonality with the juridical conception of power developed by the eighteenth century liberal *philosophes*. This latter conception envisaged power as essentially having the status of a commodity; power was seen as a 'right' that everyone possesses and thus is something that can be transferred or alienated, in part or in full. The legitimisation of a set of power relations is thus established within a legal framework such as a contract: "Power is that concrete power which every individual holds, and whose partial or total cession enables political power or sovereignty to be established" (Foucault 1980, p. 88). Although the legalistic terminology is largely absent from the Marxist conception, Foucault identifies an inherent homogeneity between it and the juridical model, insofar as the two view the functioning of power in an essentially economic sense. For the juridical theory the logic of power is explicable in the analogous process of exchange and circulation of commodities; and for the Marxist conception the concrete manifestations of power, and the primary role of politics and ideology, is likewise discoverable in the economy. It is this shared assumption that Foucault argues to be both underdeveloped and severely limiting; he argues that it is simply not the case that power is always subordinate to and dependent on the economy, nor is the commodity a suitable representative of power. In contradistinction Foucault asserts that "…power is neither given, nor exchanged, nor

recovered, but rather exercised, and that it only exists in action…[and also] that power is not primarily the maintenance and reproduction of economic relations, but is above all a relation of force" (Foucault 1980, p. 89). The question as to how power is exercised, and to what ends, is thus renewed.

Foucault identifies two distinct yet complimentary non-economic hypotheses on the nature of power broadly accepted by many of his contemporaries at the time of his writing on the subject, and incidentally he acknowledges that a combination of the two represented his own approach in his earlier writings. The first hypothesis equates the function of power with that of repression, Foucault traces this idea back to Hegel via Reich and Freud: whether it be in regards to 'nature', 'the instincts', 'a class', 'individuals' and so on, power is that force which controls and suppresses. The function of power is thus inherently negative and can be opposed to freedom, liberation and other like notions. The second hypothesis, the origin of which Foucault identifies with Nietzsche, conceives of power relations as being a 'hostile engagement of forces'. Here power is viewed as something quite unstable and in flux, and is analogous to instances of 'struggle', 'conflict' and 'war'. This conception of power corresponds with that of Nietzsche's early period, and is exemplified in the struggle between the Dionysian and Apollonian elements in *The Birth of Tragedy*:

> …[A] metaphysical comfort tears us momentarily from the bustle of the changing figures. We are really for a brief moment primordial being itself, feeling its raging desire for existence and joy in existence; the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena, now appear necessary to us, in view of the excess of countless forms of existence which force and push one another into life, in view of the exuberant fertility of the universal will (BT 17).

The combination of these hypotheses establishes a different binary opposition applicable to the analysis of power from that which was utilised under the juridical model. For the juridical theory power relations can be conceived of in terms of contract and oppression, i.e. power is exercised either legitimately or illegitimately, rightly or wrongly. The refined approaches displace this opposition with that of struggle and repression: power is conceived of as a hostile engagement of forces, temporarily resulting in instances of domination and subjugation which in turn result in the resumption of struggle. I would argue that this latter approach corresponds well with the theory of power implied by the theory of ideology examined thus far: the hostile engagement of forces manifests in class struggle and results in the establishment of an ideological superstructure, one of whose functions is the repression of those interests at odds with that of the dominant class or classes. The primary determinant of this play of forces, borrowing from the juridical model, is the economy. For Foucault this struggle/repression opposition, like the juridical model, is inadequate.

The importance of Foucault's critique of what he terms the 'repressive hypothesis' for a theory of ideology is most clearly evinced in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. In this work Foucault investigates the historical changes regarding the culturally dominant attitudes towards sex and sexuality in the West, with a focus on the apparently repressive conservatism typical of the Victorian era. This trend, the occurrence of which Foucault identifies as having first arisen during the seventeenth century, is often conceived of as an ideology of prohibition; sexuality is not openly discussed, bodies are concealed and certain mores of decorum are established in which matrimony is presented as the exclusive location of adult sexuality. Leaving

aside the question of whether this accurately reflects the state of affairs of the time, and Foucault's work makes a strong case that it does not, it is interesting to attempt to apply the struggle/repression conception of power as a means for its analysis. The apparent ideology of sexual repression coincides with the economic necessity of a vast increase in available labour power. Therefore:

> If one writes the history of sexuality in terms of repression, relating this repression to the utilisation of labor capacity, one must suppose that sexual controls were the more intense and meticulous as they were directed at the poorer classes; one has to assume that they followed the path of greatest domination and the most systematic exploitation: the young adult male, possessing nothing more than his life force, had to be the primary target of a subjugation destined to shift the energy available for useless pleasure toward compulsory labor (Foucault 2008, p. 120).

As Foucault notes, it is somewhat strange that an economic imperative for increased procreation among the working classes would manifest in an ideology of sexual repression, it could certainly be argued that an ideology of sexual liberation would be just as, if not more, suited to fulfil such a demand; the fact that a given economic situation can be resolved or made compatible with such opposing ideologies surely undermines the notion that the former should be conceived as their primary determinate. Leaving this aside, Foucault's work further undermines the struggle/repression model by demonstrating that the historical records paint quite a different picture. It was simply not the case that the problem of sexuality was posed in regards to the working classes, the bourgeoisie did not establish mechanisms for the repression and control of proletariat sexuality in order to ensure their subjugation; these mechanisms of repression and control were rather established by and for the bourgeoisie itself. But as Foucault argues the terms 'repression' and 'control' are given overdue emphasis here, instances of repression and control were certainly

established, but they arose as the effects of a more general development of what Foucault terms the 'deployment of sexuality', the creation of a 'science' of sexuality whose positive effects cannot be reconciled with the repressive hypothesis.

Foucault notes that the archetypal figures to which the deployment of sexuality were first addressed were actually representative of the socially and politically dominant classes, for instance the 'idle' or 'hysterical' woman and the 'onanistic' child; the concomitant disregard for the way of life and living standards of the working classes further demonstrates their initial exclusion from this development: "The primary concern was not repression of the sex of the classes to be exploited, but rather the body, vigor, longevity, progeniture, and descent of the classes that 'ruled'" (Foucault 2008, p. 123). What the emphasis on the repression of sexuality deemed to fall outside of the newly established 'conservative' discourse fails to grasp, is thus the gradual development of a new social identity. Whereas the old aristocracies could rely upon notions of 'blood' to solidify their place within the social hierarchy, the bourgeois class rising to dominance was in need of other mechanisms for coalescing its heterogeneous elements:

> Let us not picture the bourgeoisie symbolically castrating itself the better to refuse others the right to have a sex and make use of it as they please. This class must be seen rather as being occupied, from the mid-eighteenth century on, with creating its own sexuality and forming a specific body based on it, a 'class' body with its health, hygiene, descent, and race… (Foucault 2008, p. 124).

This formulation is quite compatible with key tenets of the theory of ideology outlined in chapter 5, in particular the establishment of a sense of 'being-at-home' or rather a natural correlation between one's subjective identity and one's material practices. Moreover, the self-imposition of a social identity based partly on the

deployment of sexuality necessarily makes use of the function of an 'Other'; for those who are excluded from the deployment of sexuality are by definition potential sources of deleterious health and hygiene, degeneracy and thus possibly dangerous to the stability of the ideological formation; so again, the excluded are both a danger to, yet in a sense necessary for, the establishment of a homogeneous ideological formation.

The deployment of sexuality was eventually expanded and made to encompass the working classes as well. However, Foucault notes that this occurred after the discourse was already firmly established, and that it occurred for quite different reasons. Initially functioning primarily as a mechanism for identity formation, the political and economic utility of the deployment of sexuality was gradually made evident, a development which effected changes in both the discourse itself and the social formations to which it was applied. Foucault identifies three general movements, diffuse in time, that signify the gradual infiltration of a science of sexuality among the wider population: at the end of the eighteenth century Foucault notes a growing interest in the problems of birth control and the extent to which it was practiced; some time around the 1830's Foucault argues that there was a recognition of the political and economic expedience to be gained from the proliferation of the 'conventional family' as a standard norm, in order for greater control and regulation of the wider population, this recognition manifested in "…a great campaign for the 'moralization of the poorer classes'" (Foucault 2008, p. 122); and at the end of the nineteenth century Foucault highlights an upsurge of interest in the problems of sexual perversions and the apparent threat they pose to the stability of society in general, manifested in their meticulous absorption within the juridical and medical apparatuses. Thus here is an example of an ideology arising independently of

immediate economic determinations, an ideology which at times had an effect upon economic relations, and at other times was effected by economic relations; importantly, it was prone to adaptation, remaining relatively stable and yet capable of effecting quite different 'lived experiences' amongst the various social formations onto which it was deployed. This conception is not compatible with the struggle/repression model of ideology, but it is quite consistent with another argument developed in the previous chapter, the notion that ideological interpellation is never total, and thus the extent to which one is interpellated will vary from subject to subject:

> Some think they can denounce two symmetrical hypocrisies at the same time: the primary hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie which denies its own sexuality, and the secondary hypocrisy of the proletariat which in turn rejects its sexuality by accepting the dominant ideology. This is to misunderstand the process whereby on the contrary the bourgeoisie endowed itself, in an arrogant political affirmation, with a garrulous sexuality which the proletariat long refused to accept, since it was foisted on them for the purpose of subjugation… *one has to admit that this deployment does not operate in symmetrical fashion with respect to the social classes, and consequently, that it does not produce the same effects in them* [emphasis added] (Foucault 2008, p. 127).

Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis does not entail a reversal of the standard base/superstructure model, nor does it imply a structural reciprocity between base and superstructure à la Althusser; his critique actually goes much deeper in that it attempts to completely dissolve these binary oppositions. Thus in order to locate the practical role of ideology it is first necessary to understand what Foucault means by a 'relational' conception of power.

Foucault argues that the role of power in a social body needs to be understood within the context of a dynamic network comprised of a multiplicity of force relations. In a quite literal sense it can be said to function everywhere; and this already amounts to a strong divergence from the Marxist tradition, in which it is often assumed that power can be *seized*, and thus the omnipresence of power is limited to its effects. For Foucault power is omnipresent,

> …not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere (Foucault 2008, 93).

The positing of diffuse and manifold power determinations does not, however, do away with the *problems* of power; domination and subjugation consistently retain central prominence in Foucault's analysis and, against the objections discussed below, this remains pertinent in an ethical sense. Power defined as the composition of a multiplicity of force relations does necessitate a revaluation of the approaches to ideology in practice examined thus far – specific levels, binary oppositions and strict hierarchies are too rigid tools for such an analysis. In light of this Foucault proposes five 'methodological precautions' that must be considered in order to grasp the dynamism of power.

In the first place there is a need for a reorientation regarding what is considered to be the proper object of analysis; Foucault argues that it is a mistake to attempt to delineate a central locus of power, to begin by locating power in its most obvious, legitimised forms – central governments, entrenched institutions, much of what has been argued to comprise an ideological superstructure. In order to establish a general mode of power Foucault maintains that it is much more productive to approach from

the opposite direction, instances in which power is operative "…at its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary, that is, in its more regional and local forms and institutions" (Foucault 1980, p. 96). This follows naturally from a multiplicity of force relations, for a hegemonic formation to develop it would have to begin with the colonisation of reactive forces in the most localised spheres. In the second place Foucault argues that there is a need to dissociate oneself from the idea that power is operative primarily at the level of 'conscious intention or decision'. This is particularly relevant to the theory of ideology in Marx, implicit in which is the presumption that the 'secrets' of power can be discerned through the unmasking of ideological pronouncements. For Foucault the intentional character of power is indistinguishable from its immediate practical effects, however this is not to say it is irrational:

> …there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. But this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject… the rationality of power is characterised by tactics that are often quite explicit at the restricted level where they are inscribed (the local cynicism of power), tactics which, becoming connected to one another, attracting and propagating one another, but finding their base of support and their condition elsewhere, end by forming comprehensive systems: the logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them, and few who can be said to have formulated them… (Foucault 2008, p. 95).

The third precaution is to avoid conceiving of power as a possession, the idea that there are individuals or classes with consolidated power and therefore individuals or classes who are powerless. For Foucault power is always in a process of circulation; he uses the metaphor of a chain, in which individuals are always in a situation in which they are simultaneously exercising a form of power as well as being acted upon

by a form of power, "…individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application" (Foucault 1980, p. 98). The fourth precaution warns against a hasty conclusion that may be drawn from the previous three. It has been said that the analysis of power, with regards to its original or determinate locations, is to be found in its most diffuse and localised regions; that power is in a strong sense non-intentional; and that power is simultaneously exercised by and exercised upon each individual within a vast network of force relations. From this it should not be concluded that power is evenly distributed amongst a social body, as Foucault notes, there is no "…democratic or anarchic distribution of power through bodies" (Foucault 1980, p. 99). Relationships of domination and subordination and hierarchical formations are not incompatible with a relational conception of power; rather what should be concluded from such a conception is that a hegemonic power cannot function autonomously, in order to function it must necessarily enter into or engender relations of recognition, acquiescence or resistance, all of which being forms of power as well – an insight well illustrated by Hegel's Master/Slave dialectic. Foucault's overall point is that there is a need to discard the *deductive* conception of power in which power is seen to emanate from a centralised source, with its effectiveness being measured by the extent to which it reaches the peripheries of a social body. On the contrary, Foucault advocates an *ascending* analysis of power, a focus on the ways in which the most localised tactics and strategies of power are absorbed, utilised, transformed and displaced by ever more general power formations, up to the national and international hegemonic formations. The final precaution contains Foucault's most direct refutation of the expediency of a theory of ideology for social analyses. The aforementioned mechanisms through which power can be said to develop are possible, and this can be gleaned from the terminology of 'tactics' and 'strategies',

because power is always exercised within an apparatus of knowledge, or discourse. Foucault argues that much of the confusion around the function of power is the result of the application of inappropriate discourses intended for its explication. The 'sovereign' conception of power implicit in the juridical theory may have been appropriate for the structures of feudal societies, but Foucault argues that its retention in the conceptual analysis of contemporary societies results in an inability to properly understand the dominant form of power applicable to the modern age, what he terms *disciplinary power*. Disciplinary power and its relation to discourse is described as follows:

> It is the production of effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge – methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research, apparatuses of control. All this means that power, when it is exercised through these subtle mechanisms, cannot but evolve, organise and put into circulation a knowledge, or rather apparatuses of knowledge, which are not ideological constructs (Foucault 1980, p. 102).

Foucault goes on to say that these apparatuses of knowledge are both 'much more and much less' than ideology. While it will be argued that Foucault is right to distinguish between discourse and ideology, and emphasise the structural pre-eminence of the former, I still maintain that it would be wrong to therefore dismiss the relevance of ideological discourses and their relation to discourse in general. However, before developing this argument there is a need to address the criticism that Foucault's work introduces a peculiar kind of relativism that, if true, could completely dissolve the questions to which a theory of ideology, and arguably areas of Foucault's work itself, attempts to answer.

Taylor has noted that an important aspect of Foucault's work on the pervasive nature of power has been in identifying its most surreptitious and insidious forms; for instance the height of modern disciplinary power is conceived in those instances in which power no longer appears to take the outward form of 'power per se', when it is concealed behind notions of scientific discourse and advancement. In this respect, Taylor argues that Foucault's work is representative of the familiar tradition of 'unmasking', and is therefore imbued with certain normative valuations:

> You would think that implicit in all this was the notion of two goods that need rescuing and that the analyses help to rescue: freedom and truth – two goods that would be linked deeply granted the fact that the negation of one (domination) makes essential use of the negation of the other (disguise). We would be back on familiar terrain with an old Enlightenment-inspired combination (Taylor 1984, p. 152).

On the other hand Foucault's work does not allow for such a critique, insofar as each and any 'truth' inveighed against the dominant discourses of power/knowledge must itself be limited to its correspondence with a particular set of power relations, there is no 'outside':

> There is no truth that can be espoused, defended, or rescued against systems of power. On the contrary, each such system defines its own variant of truth. And there is no escape from power into freedom, for such systems of power are coextensive with human society (Taylor 1984, pp. 152-153).

This leads Taylor to question whether Foucault represents a genuinely original perspective on the problem of power, or has advanced a confused and perhaps contradictory method of analysis. What is the value of a critique of power, or even a more general analysis of the discourses of power and knowledge, that is necessarily biased, essentially an expression of one particular and contingent knowledge apparatus? Is such a critique redundant? The applicability of these questions to a

theory of ideology is palpable. A similar objection to Foucault has been advanced by Habermas. Habermas notes that, given that the structures required for the very possibility of truth claims are themselves neither true nor false in any meaningful sense, Foucault's analysis is limited to a value-free assessment of the 'wills' that find expression in such claims and their intricate connections to the networks of power. He goes on to note, however, that Foucault's genealogical method does appear to contain an implied normative standard, insofar as there is a persistent impetus towards the unearthing of 'subjugated' or 'disqualified' knowledges, the discourses relevant to those who are confronted most directly by the technologies of power, discourses deemed to be naïve or unscientific and thus excluded by the dominant discourses. This notion of disqualified knowledge is discernible in Foucault's *Discourse on Language* (1972, pp. 216-220), where he argues that a discourse always entails certain rules of exclusion which govern who has the most right to say something of a particular subject, "…not just anyone…may speak of just anything" (1972, p. 216); in addition to these prohibitions, Foucault notes another form of exclusion in the establishment of oppositions between what is considered to be reasonable or folly, this being exemplified in the classification of the insane; finally, Foucault argues that the simple distinction between truth and falsity itself functions as a system of exclusion, insofar as what is to be counted as knowledge (and the means by which this knowledge can be attained) is historically variable and contingent on the dominant discourse of the time, as evidence of this he points towards the fluctuation in the objects of knowledge that serve to sharply distinguish the 'will to truth' of the ancient Greek poets from the empiricists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (1972, pp. 218-219). That this emphasis on the exclusivity of discourse constitutes a

normative standard is an assumption that is also shared by some who are sympathetic to Foucault:

> We contend his work aims at clearing a space in which the formerly voiceless might begin to articulate their desires – to *counter* the domination of prevailing authoritative discourses… when those usually spoken for and about by others begin to speak for themselves, they produce a "counter-discourse"…[and] have begun to resist the power seeking to oppress them (Moussa & Scapp 1996, pp. 88-89).

The subjects comprising the bulk of Foucault's work do seem to confirm this. However, the privileging of disqualified knowledges is in need of justification, to what end is this counter-power illuminated? This problem, Habermas argues, is resolved in the Marxist tradition only because it adheres to a philosophy of history grounded in the development of class consciousness and the productive forces; he refers to the early Lukács for whom "…Marxist theory owed its freedom from ideological bias to the privileged possibilities of knowledge from a perspective of experience that had arisen with the position of the wage-laborer in the process of production" (Habermas 1990, pp. 280-281). This justification is not available to Foucault as he abstains from any systematic or teleological reading of history. The issue is further complicated as, given Foucault's conception of power/knowledge, any instance of disqualified knowledge or counter-power is *by definition* manifested within the self-contained totality of discourses established by the hegemonic forces, of which it is a reaction; therefore Habermas argues that the 'victory' of these subjugated knowledges would equate to their immediate transformation into discourses of domination, thus engendering new forms of counter-power. If the only constant is the ever-shifting applications of power, Habermas wonders by what right we privilege one form of discourse over another. This leads him to question whether Foucault's genealogical method is superfluous:

> …[I]f it is just a matter of mobilizing counterpower, of strategic battles and wily confrontations, why should we muster any resistance at all against this all-pervasive power circulating in the bloodstream of the body of modern society, instead of just adapting ourselves to it? …It makes sense that a value-free analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the opponent is of use to one who wants to take up the fight – but why fight at all (Habermas 1990, pp. 283-284)?

These criticisms appear quite damaging, particularly as it has been suggested that ideology, in a similarly qualified sense as Foucault's notion of power, is operative everywhere; so the same objection can be made, what is the value of a critique of ideology that is itself necessarily ideological? However, the potency of these criticisms is greatly reduced if consideration is made of just what it would take to satisfy the requirements of Taylor and Habermas. It was precisely the attempt to establish a non-ideological standard from which to evaluate ideology that led to the incoherence of both ideas; the idea that a position of neutrality is possible, required even, in order for a justified preference of one discourse over another is similarly untenable. Unfortunately this line of reasoning does not resolve the issues raised, but merely demonstrates their applicability to both approaches. A stronger defence of Foucault has been made by Rouse, who notes that objections such as those raised by Taylor and Habermas above, actually make use of and rely upon crucial disjunctions which simplify and misrepresent Foucault's conception of power:

> Either a critique of power in the name of legitimacy, or an acceptance that power makes right; either the validation of one's claims from a standpoint of science/epistemic sovereignty, or an acceptance that all claims to truth are of equivalent standing. Yet these disjunctions themselves presuppose a standpoint of epistemic sovereignty, and to invoke them may beg the question. Even the positions

> that in the end are attributed to Foucault (epistemological relativism and/or a reduction of truth to domination and legitimacy to forced acceptance) are positions that claim sovereignty by standing outside epistemic and political conflicts to adjudicate the claims competing parties can legitimately make upon us (Rouse 1994, p. 105).

The conclusion, then, that it follows from Foucault that all truth claims are of equal standing, appears to rest on two false presuppositions: that power is inherently negative and that the discourses through which power is exercised are relatively static. However, Foucault argues that the discourses of power/knowledge are in a constant state of transformation, and thus the introduction or rather elevation of disqualified knowledges has the potential to re-orientate the boundaries and referents of a discursive field, thereby altering the way in which power is exercised. A discursive shift of this sort has been noted by Hacking in his analysis of Foucault's notion of *savoir* or 'depth knowledge':

> *Savoir* is not knowledge in the sense of a bunch of solid propositions. This 'depth' knowledge is more like a postulated set of rules that determine what kinds of sentences are going to count as true or false in some domain. The kinds of things to be said about the brain in 1780 are not the kinds of things to be said a quarter-century later. That is not because we have different beliefs about brains, but because 'brain' denotes a new kind of object in the later discourse, and occurs in different sorts of sentences (Hacking 1986, pp. 30-31).

Similarly, Hacking notes the Liberationists' claim that the elevation of the discourse of the 'doctors of deviancy' entailed a reformulation of the category 'homosexual', where what once referred specifically to certain *acts* is now applied to certain *people* (Hacking 1986, p. 36). In such cases, then, the elevation or disqualification of knowledge is not simply the outcome of conflicting perspectives on a pre-given object

of knowledge, but rather a fundamental change in that object itself; and this implies that Foucault's notion of power/knowledge is more open-ended than his critics allow. It may still be claimed that this results in a form of relativism, insofar as it is unclear how we can justify the privileging of one discourse over another; however, I would argue that such a reading could only follow if power is conceived as essentially being a relation of domination and subjugation. If one maintains a Nietzschean conception of power, a strong influence on Foucault, then a broad spectrum of power applications is conceivably possible, ranging from the domination of others through to forms of 'self-overcoming' and all manner of applications between. For Nietzsche the differing manifestations of power are quite clearly compatible with a coherent system of valuation: to the extent that power tends towards or is expressive of an *over-fullness of life*, it is valuable; where it is conducive to the *impoverishment of life*, it is not: "Regarding all aesthetic values I now avail myself of this main distinction: I ask in every instance, 'is it hunger or superabundance that has here become creative?'" (GS 370). Power that is manifested in a relation of domination and subjugation would have to figure at the bottom of this scale of values: "Certainly the state in which we hurt others is rarely as agreeable, in an unadulterated way, as that in which we benefit others; it is a sign that we are still lacking power, or it shows a sense of frustration in the face of this poverty…" (GS 13); at the top, power as a form of creative life-affirmation, exemplified in aesthetic expression:

> And how could I bear to be human if the human being were not also a composer-poet and riddle-guesser and the redeemer of coincidence! To redeem that which has passed away and to re-create all 'It was' into a 'Thus I willed it!' – that alone should I call redemption (Z II: 20).

This reading would have a definite parallel with the above noted weakness of an ideological formation that is overtly reliant upon the repressive State apparatuses,

relative to one that aims towards a sense of aesthetic intersubjectivity.[22] Thus I would argue that a case could be made for the ethical pertinence of Foucault's project, insofar as it works towards the integration of more amenable forms of power. Similarly with ideology: the ubiquitous presence of ideology *as such* does not equate to an equivalent validity for all of its multiform manifestations. A case can still be made for the valuation of different ideological formations, perhaps with a mind towards the resistances they generate and the effects they have upon those excluded by the discourse.

Ideological discourses should thus be conceived as a supplement to the networks of discourse in general, though they differ from them in an important respect: Whereas the dynamic discourses of power/knowledge tend towards constant adaptation and readjustment, with the absorption or rejection of different power strategies, ideology tends towards relative stabilisation. It is in the breakdown of the vast networks of hegemonic power, and thus in the re-engagement of hostile forces at the local levels, the ultimate support for such a formation, that ideology is able to gain momentum. It is not surprising that economic crises have been conceived as the primary determinate of ideology, as they arguably represent one of the most visible instances of a breakdown of hegemonic power in the resurgence of localised struggles. The re-engagement of hostile forces precipitates a new need for stabilisation, an ostensible equilibrium formerly provided by the stabilisation through adaptation of the hegemonic discourses – and ideology can be seen as a less sophisticated, yet arguably more potent, form of such stabilisation. Ideology is more potent insofar as it speaks to the psychological and aesthetic disposition of the individual subject, as the grounds

[22] Of course, it must be remembered that this distinction becomes increasingly problematic to the extent and manner in which this sense of intersubjectivity is itself reliant upon the use of the ideological figure of the 'Other'.

for societal identification; however, this potency in cohesion is only possible insofar as an ideological discourse eschews from any radical transformation dictated by the dynamic and ever-shifting relations of power. What can be derived from this relative lack of adaptability is an inherent frailty in the long-term effectiveness of an ideological discourse, and thus the need to displace this frailty in the projection of an 'Other' in order for it to be sustainable. The incorporation of Foucault's work certainly dethrones ideology of its predominant role in the functioning of social structures in general, however, I would argue that it is clearly compatible with the outline of ideology sketched in chapter 5. As to the primary determinate of ideology, although it is unequivocally connected to the material manifestations of the discourses of power/knowledge, I would suggest a return to the notion that it is essentially a psychological response.

6.3 Three Cases: Early Christianity, the European Far Right and the New Age Movement

In order to test the strength of the outline proposed above it will be useful to apply it to some historical examples. It seems that a good place to start would be the case of the early Christians for two reasons: on the one hand it could certainly be argued that the development of the traditional theory of ideology outlined in chapters 1-3 can be read as being a reaction against the perceived influence of Christian theology on the intellectual landscape of the time, this is most explicit in the works of Feuerbach and Marx. On the other hand I have argued that this critique is itself imbued with certain theological conceits, in particular a teleological conception of development and

reconciliation. It will be interesting, then, to see if the refined approach to ideology is better equipped to assess this phenomenon.

Situated on the frontiers of the Roman Empire, the history of first-century Palestine attests to a disruption of hegemonic power in the re-engagement of hostile forces at the local levels. In describing a period that begins with the breakdown of the Hasmonean Dynasty through civil war (67 – 37 B.C.E), proceeds under Roman occupation, first indirectly under Herod (37 – 4 B.C.E) and later directly, and ends with the outbreak of the first Jewish-Roman war (66 – 73 C.E), Josephus writes of a region in perpetual civil unrest, afflicted by numerous factional disputes and recurrent popular uprisings. The short-lived ministry of Jesus of Nazareth (28-30 – 30-33 C.E) would appear, then, to have arisen in a time and place that was highly favourable to the influence of ideological formations, if of course the refined theory of ideology is correct on this point – and there is much in Josephus that suggests it is. The messianic message behind Jesus' movement appears to have been a popular and commonly recurring one: Josephus writes of Hezekiah, a 'bandit chief', 'over-running' a district adjacent to Syria who was caught and executed along with many followers by Herod (Josephus 1972, p. 48); Simon of Peraea, a slave who "…considered that his good looks and great stature entitled him to set a crown on his own head" (Josephus 1972, p. 119); a shepherd named Athrongaeus, "[a] third claimant to the throne…whose hopes were based on his physical strength and contempt of death, and on the support of four brothers like himself" (Josephus 1972, p. 119). The consolidation of Roman authority in the region was met with strong resistance under the leadership of Judas the Galilean, "…[who] tried to stir the natives to revolt, saying that they would be cowards if they submitted to paying taxes to the Romans, and after serving God alone

accepted human masters. This man was a rabbi with a sect of his own, and was quite unlike the others" (Josephus 1972, p. 125). Later Josephus writes of a rise in 'cheats and deceivers claiming inspiration', who he charges with attempting to bring about revolutionary change by leading their followers "…out into the wild country on the pretence that there God would show them signs of approaching freedom" (Josephus 1972, p. 139). The most dangerous of these instigators, according to Josephus' disapproving survey, is referred to as the 'Egyptian false prophet': "Arriving in the country this man, a fraud who posed as a seer, collected about 30,000 dupes, led them round by the wild country to the Mount of Olives, and from there was ready to force an entry into Jerusalem…" (Josephus 1972, p. 139). After the outbreak of the first Jewish-Roman war Josephus refers to Menahem, son of the aforementioned Judas the Galilean (Josephus 1972, p. 157), and Simon, son of Gioras (Josephus 1972, p. 264) as being the leaders of two separate Jewish resistance movements with a messianic ideology. One can of course add to this list John the Baptist, of whom Jesus appears to have been a disciple. Although for some the categorisation of Jesus' ministry in the above tradition may appear to be a superficial exercise, it should be noted that for Jesus' contemporaries the terms 'Messiah' and 'Son of God' did not have the same connotations as they would for later Christians:

> Jesus' claim to be the Messiah was not in anyway blasphemous in the eyes of the Pharisees or, indeed, of any other Jews, for the title 'Messiah' carried no connotation of deity or divinity. The word 'Messiah' simply means 'anointed one', and it is a title of kingship; every Jewish king of the Davidic dynasty had this title. To claim to be the Messiah meant simply to claim the throne of Israel, and while this was a reckless and foolhardy thing to do when the Romans had abolished the Jewish monarchy, it did not constitute any offence in Jewish law (Maccoby 1998, p. 37).

Maccoby notes that there were some differences between the advocates of the messianic ideology with regards to their interpretation of its prophetic meaning, in particular there was a divergence between those who saw the Messiah as the harbinger of the restoration of national independence and liberation from Rome, and those who saw this liberation as a precursor to a more general and far-reaching era of peace and liberation. The role of pacifism in this movement was also somewhat contentious and is historically ambiguous, though a common thread of divinely ordained liberation seems to be a fair assessment. The most pressing issue for this study that arises from the above overview, then, is an explanation of how and why the Christian movement was able to separate itself from the other messianic movements and develop into the dominant religion it would become.

In order to understand the rise of Christianity it is almost impossible to overestimate the influence of the Epistles of Paul. The canonisation of the New Testament occurred relatively late in the history of the early Church, at the Council of Hippo Regius in 398 C.E, and the sequence that was decided upon works to cloud the historical development of the Church's teachings. The standard arrangement begins with the Gospel of Matthew and is followed by the Gospels of Mark, Luke and John, with the Epistles of Paul appearing as a sort of footnote. The actual order in which these texts were composed is as follows: The Epistles of Paul (48 – 56 C.E), the Gospel of Mark (70 – 71 C.E), the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (90 – 100 C.E) and the Gospel of John (100 – 120 C.E). The most important thing to keep in mind is that the nature of the doctrine espoused by the immediate successors of Jesus' ministry, James and the apostles, cannot be known with any certainty, as the congregation was thoroughly dispersed along with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. So the only link

between the original Christian church in Jerusalem and the Christianity of the New Testament is to be found in the letters of Paul; a tentative link given that Paul never met Jesus, if we discount his vision on the road to Damascus, and is often openly hostile to the Jerusalem church in his letters. Aslan writes:

> After the Temple was destroyed, the holy city burned to the ground, and the remnants of the Jerusalem assembly dispersed, Paul underwent a stunning rehabilitation in the Christian community. With the possible exception of the Q document (which is, after all, a hypothetical text), the only writings about Jesus that existed in 70 C.E. were the letters of Paul (Aslan 2013, p. 214).

The Q document refers to a hypothetical collection of Jesus' sayings, an inference drawn as an explanation for the common material found in the Gospels of Mathew and Luke (90 – 100 C.E) but absent in the Gospel of Mark (70 – 71 C.E). In any case, if one wants to identify the roots of Christian ideology and the ways in which it differentiated itself from other messianic movements of the time, the Epistles of Paul would be the most illuminating documents to assess for "…the theories of Paul were already before the writers of the Gospels and coloured their interpretations of Jesus' activities. Paul is, in a sense, present from the very first word of the New Testament" (Maccoby 1986, p. 4).

What is immediately apparent in Paul is the exulted status of Jesus of Nazareth, unlike other Messiahs Jesus is not ordained by God nor a messenger from God but the literal Son of God, God incarnate: "For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering" (Romans 8: 3). This reinterpretation of the nature of Jesus/God would set the movement apart from other messianic movements; it was not only controversial among non-Christians but was a matter of fierce debate amongst

the early Christians themselves, and it was only much later at the Council of Nicaea (325 C.E) that this doctrine was accepted as orthodoxy. As Aslan notes:

> It was not unusual to be called Son of God in ancient Judaism. God calls David his Son: 'today I have begotten you' (Psalms 2:7). He even calls Israel his 'first-born son' (Exodus 4:22). But in every case, Son of God is meant as a title, not a description. Paul's view of Jesus as the literal son of God is without precedence in second Temple Judaism (Aslan 2013, p. 266).

This transcendental conception of Jesus is highly important as it lays the foundation for Paul's comprehensive use of the ideological Other; coinciding with Jesus' divine status is a reinterpretation of the 'kingdom of God' as being a celestial and no longer a terrestrial idea; and so unlike the case would be with other messianic ideologies, the crucifixion of Jesus, the dispersion of his ministry and the failure of promised liberation cannot negate the central tenets of Christianity, salvation is now a matter that can be perpetually deferred: "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (1 Corinthians 15: 50), "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8: 18), "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands" (2 Corinthians 5: 1). This displacement of the ideological object coincided with a similar operation in which events that were counterposed to the ideology's vision and a hindrance to its progression were reinscribed into the religion itself. Edward Gibbon noted a peculiar enthusiasm for the notion of demons amongst the early Christians, a tenet which enabled for competing religious practices to be conceived not as an alternative but rather as an effect of Christian practices, or lack thereof:

> Those rebellious spirits who had been degraded from the rank of angels and cast down into the infernal pit were still permitted to roam upon earth, to torment the bodies and to seduce the minds of sinful men. The demons soon discovered and abused the natural propensity of the human heart towards devotion, and, artfully withdrawing the adoration of mankind from their Creator, they usurped the place and honors of the Supreme Deity (Gibbon 2003, p. 247).

The Christianity of Paul adheres to the schema of a refined theory of ideology in another sense, with regards to a stabilisation of forces. Though Foucault's work demonstrates that such an organisation is not in an actual fact possible, I would argue that its existence as semblance or at least projected as a possibility is essential to what differentiates ideology from discourse in general. Paul is at pains to present Christianity as a uniquely universal doctrine, loosening it from its foundation in Mosaic Law and its connection to Jerusalem; the primary aim of Paul's preaching is the conversion and/or assimilation of the various adherents of the polytheistic religions scattered throughout the Roman empire and beyond:

> But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus (Galatians 1: 15-17)

The move towards a semblance of stabilisation is best evinced in Paul's complete disavowal of the spirit of rebelliousness from which the messianic movements originated. Paul not only presents his doctrine as being perfectly compatible with Roman domination, he also argues that any and all forms of government are equally

acceptable from the point of view of Christianity – temporal conformity in exchange for eternal liberation in the next life:

> Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves (Romans 13: 1-2).

This purported reconciliation through abnegation, combined with a uniquely suitable socio-historical landscape, helped to propel the advancement of Christian ideology. As Gibbon notes, the vast network of public highways, constructed for the transportation of the Roman legions to and from all the major cities in the empire, allowed for the probably unprecedented speed at which such an ideology was able to extend itself in a geographical sense: "It has been observed, with truth as well as propriety, that the conquests of Rome prepared and facilitated those of Christianity" (Gibbon 2003, p. 270). As to the transition from ideology to discourse – and whether this is ever possible in a complete sense is difficult to say, though in this case the existence of doctrinal and denominational disputes and refinement suggests that it is not an impossibility – though it would be impossible to locate with any precise degree of accuracy, the conversion of the Emperor Constantine (306 – 337 C.E.) and later the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire point towards a move in that direction.

Shifting the focus to our contemporary situation, the global financial crisis of 2008 was a particularly significant event that signalled critical fault lines in the edifice of hegemonic power. Although the crisis was complex with consequences varying in severity from region to region, I will focus attention on the case of Europe, with an

emphasis on the rise in popularity of the extreme nationalist parties and their tendencies towards populism, xenophobia and racism – a phenomenon that gained momentum following the crisis, and would later be exacerbated by the European refugee crisis in 2015.

Broadly speaking the crisis can be seen as a predictable consequence, though not in its scale and intensity, of ever-expanding global neoliberal financial and economic policies. The catalysts of this particular crisis, and here I rely heavily on the informative survey of recent literature on the subject undertaken by Sue Mew (2013), included the bankruptcy of the Lehman Brothers investment bank and the liquidity crisis incurred by AIG, events which precipitated the conversion of privately generated debt into sovereign debt in order to maintain the functioning of this international industry. The crisis was exacerbated further by the wide-spread practices of speculative mortgage lending by US financial organizations and the trading of derivative securities by international banks, practices which brought about a 'bubble' leading to crises and recessions around the world. Of most pertinence to this study, maintaining the schema outlined above, is the way in which this breakdown in the effectiveness of the structure of global finance was made manifest in the sphere of localised conflicts. Mew notes that:

> …the global crisis in all its localized manifestations embraces a deepening *social crisis* that is wrought by loss of homes, falling incomes, unemployment, cuts to welfare provision, rising taxation, and increased food and energy costs. For many, these are the very basic needs for social reproduction… (Mew 2013, p. 99).

Her work highlights the growth of a sense of disenfranchisement in Europe following the crisis, a sentiment bolstered by the perception that governmental adherence to the dictates of international neoliberal policies represents a fundamental loss in national

sovereignty. The ideological conception of reconciliation and being 'at home' is thus critically undermined; and with it the figure of the 'Other' is no longer fixed, and the matter of who or what is to be projected into this role becomes open to contestation:

> Real political power, it seems, lies elsewhere and is not to be confused with the decision-making of the political or ruling elite. Indeed, the choices and actions of political elites these days are circumscribed by a combination of international and supranational institutions, financialization, and techno-managerial bureaucracies (Mew 2013, p. 103).

This disillusionment is also apparent in the strong reactions against the widespread implementation of austerity measures as a response to the crisis – reactions that are not limited to a critique of financial and economic policy, but speak to a growing sense that such measures are representative of a broader process of the gradual dismantling of the foundations necessary for social democracy. Mew argues that this sentiment can be read as an effect of a general 'crisis of care' in Europe, and one of the more common material effects of this crisis in local spheres has been a growing disengagement with the hegemonic forms of political practice:

> This state of affairs has been exacerbated by a corresponding crisis *of* social democracy, namely low voter turnout at elections, political apathy, and evaporating trust in governments or traditional politics to address the questions that matter most to people (Mew 2013, p. 103).

The situation, then, is highly conducive to the growth in influence of ideological formations – and arguably the ideologies of most concern, as Mew notes, are the ones that embody a resurgence of the most insidious forms of nationalism.

It so happened that the period following the crisis saw just such resurgence, with significant electoral gains made by extreme right-wing political parties across the

continent; some of the more prominent included: the National Front (France), Jobbik (Hungary), the Freedom Party of Austria (Austria), the Finns Party (Finland), the Party for Freedom (Netherlands), the Danish People's Party (Denmark) and Golden Dawn (Greece). These parties, and others similar, differ a good deal in the overtness of their more unsavoury and prejudicial platforms, as well as the extent to which they can be considered to advocate for an incitement towards intolerance and violence. What unites them all, however, is their familiar use of the negatively construed image of the ideological Other, a displacement that can be discerned in the steadfast assumption that the root causes of Europe's problems lie in the adoption or rather 'corruption' of influences from 'outside' – this is manifest in the importance they ascribe to their strong anti-immigration message and their peculiar fear of the 'Islamisation' of Europe. On the surface this can be read as a paradigmatic case of the Žižekian notion that an ideology both arises from and works to partially conceal the inconsistencies and antagonisms that are inherent to a social-symbolic order, in this case the crisis is conceived to have resulted from the degeneracy of a more or less sound system rather than being something that was structurally imminent to that system; and while this may be true there are a number of other, more subtle, points that can be gleaned from this phenomenon as well.

In the first place the importance of a reengagement in localised conflicts for the development of ideological discourse can be confirmed in this case, insofar as the target audience is in the main those who perceive themselves to be some of the most downtrodden and marginalised from what is considered to be mainstream society. Srećko Horvat notes that there is a strong tendency among the extreme right to present themselves as being the expression of the working class. He cites the case of

the 'Workers Party' in the Czech Republic, who have organised pogroms against Roma people, and that of Golden Dawn, who advance the notion that immigrants 'stealing the jobs' of ordinary Greeks are mostly to blame for the crisis. Stressing the point that one should not conflate two examples from vastly different socio-historical periods, Horvat nevertheless demonstrates that there is an undeniable resemblance between this discourse and that of the bourgeoning Nazi movement in Weimar Germany:

> Here is a typical illustration of this rhetoric: "They have taken all sovereign rights from us. We are just good enough for international capital to allow us to fill its money sacks with interest payments … Three million people lack work and sustenance. The officials, it is true, work to conceal the misery. They speak of measures and silver linings. Things are getting steadily better for them, and steadily worse for us. The illusion of freedom, peace and prosperity that we were promised when we wanted to take our fate into our own hands is vanishing. Only the complete collapse of our people can follow from these irresponsible policies." Isn't this a perfect description of Europe's current deadlock? Would you expect such a discourse from SYRIZA or from the Golden Dawn? The answer might be surprising: the author is no-one else than Joseph Goebbels, and it's part of his text 'Wir fordern' ('We demand') published in the fourth issue of *Der Angriff*, dated 25 July 1927 (Horvat 2015, pp. 79-80).

Horvat is not arguing that there is fundamental commonality between the opposite ends of the political spectrum, insofar as they both appear to make use of the notion of 'workers' rights' to advance their cause; rather the point to be made is how effectively the financial crisis, and I would argue any crisis of hegemony, can be exploited with the use of ideological discourse. Indeed the appropriation of a 'workers' rights' discourse by the extreme right can be seen as a particularly insidious application of

ideology – for in practice the appropriation is a mere pretence, Horvat notes how the predominant propaganda actually works to displace the causes of the crisis by inciting conflict *between* different working classes – "the German against the Greek, the Austrian and the Greek against the immigrants, and so on" (Horvat 2015, pp. 83-84). Thus this ideological strategy can be seen as an attempt at the reestablishment of a hegemonic formation through cynical obfuscation, an example of ideological discourse functioning as a supplement to discourse in general.

This phenomenon gives credence to the idea that ideological discourse is a supplement to discourse in general in another way. It can be seen in the way in which the extreme rhetoric of this movement can actually function to strengthen or naturalise those aspects of hegemonic power of which it is reacting against. In the context of the EU crisis, the far-right's anti-immigration agitation is an excellent example of this:

> During public appearances, Golden Dawn and the like loudly express that which is repressed in the European Union's vocabulary, these new extreme movements create a political climate where, for example, the exceptionally tough anti-immigration legislation of the EU begins to look 'moderate' in comparison. As a consequence, this shifting context enables extreme movements to radicalise further (Horvat 2015, pp. 170-172).

In this case an ideological discourse arises expressing a perceived weakness in a hegemonic practice, retroactively strengthening said practice and thereby marginalising itself. It could be inferred that a highly contentious policy such as this is always in need of some such ideological supplement in order to present itself as palatable. Interestingly, we can witness a near reversal of this process in the case of a hegemonic discourse adopting the language and practice of ideology, as in the highly

reified notion of a 'war on terror', a war that must inevitably dispose of the principles it purports to be defending if it were to be any way practicable:

> Many liberal warriors are so eager to fight anti-democratic fundamentalism that they end up dispensing with freedom and democracy if only they may fight terror. If the 'terrorists' are ready to wreck this world for love of another, our warriors against terror are ready to wreck democracy out of hatred for the Muslim other. Some of them love human dignity so much that they are ready to legalise torture to defend it (Žižek 2015, pp. 123-124).

The contradictory and self-defeating nature of this ideology in practice highlights the fact that although ideology may be the most potent form of discourse, it is also a discourse severely lacking in the requisite potential for adaptable transformation, and thus is in constant need of the tactics of obfuscation and conceptual displacement in order to sustain itself; Žižek is right to claim that, for ideology, the power of its form far outweighs the power of its content.

The examples of early Christianity and contemporary European far-right politics are of course very distinct phenomena, they do however adhere to the traditional Marxist assumption that ideology is, at least ostensibly, primarily a discourse of the socially and economically marginalised. In order to demonstrate the pervasive nature of ideology, and to break away from the notion that ideology is always an instance of *class* struggle, another example is needed. The 'New Age' movement, which developed in the 1970's and 80's, is an excellent example of the fact that ideology is not bounded by economic determinations. It has been observed that this movement was almost exclusively manifested amongst segments of the 'baby boom' generation (those born between 1946 and 1964); statistically speaking, it was a generation that was highly educated and socially and economically privileged: "According to

Strickland and Ambrose, the baby boomers were the 'healthiest, best-fed, best-clothed, best-housed generation' to come along in the United States" (Brown 1992, p. 91). This disconnect from the traditionally conceived location of ideological formations is reinforced by Paul Heelas, who notes that one reason for the international appeal of the New Age movement is "…no doubt…that the New Age is strongly associated with the middle to upper-middle professional classes, the category of the population which is most uniform across cultures" (Heelas 1996, p. 121). Of course, the absence of a grounding in *economic* conflicts does not invalidate the aforementioned importance of the (re)emergence of localised conflicts for the growth of ideological formations. In many respects the New Age can be seen as a continuation of, or rather a transition from, the counterculture movement of the 1960's – or at the very least, many New Agers would identify themselves as being former 'hippies'; and it will be shown that many of the issues which served to foment social conflict in the counterculture were appropriated by the New Age movement, albeit in a transfigured form.

Before proceeding it is important to note some difficulties with the categorisation of this broad movement under the title of 'New Age'. In the first place, the movement is known for its eclecticism, for the adoption of numerous and diverse traditional beliefs and practices, and for its decentralised structure and rejection of all forms of 'dogmatism'; thus there is no standard or definitive criteria one can point to when talking of 'New Age spirituality'. Nevertheless the term is still useful; it has been argued that its indeterminate nature does not preclude the fact that there is a 'family resemblance' observable between the various manifestations of the 'New Age', and so "…[it is] still possible to develop a list of 'New Age' traits, as long as one bears in

mind that any given manifestation of this subculture is unlikely to be categorized by all of them" (Lewis 1992, p. 6). The second issue relates to the negative connotations associated with the term itself. As Lewis and Melton note, the attention of the mainstream media was drawn to the New Age movement in the late 1980's by events such as the airing of Shirley MacLaine's *Out on a Limb* and the Harmonic Convergence of 1987. The general reaction that developed was one of disparagement, and it is fair to say that the 'New Age' is commonly perceived to be trivial, "… 'woo-woo' and 'airy-fairy'…" (Lewis 1992, p. 3). This negative perception often extends to those for whom the label is usually applied to, and it is often the case that individuals referred to as being 'New Age' would actually reject this label themselves. So the retention of the term in the academic literature on the subject is indeed problematic. As Lewis notes, however, there is no other term available that sufficiently encapsulates all aspects of the movement; and also, the decline in self-identifying with the category 'New Age' in no way represents a decline or abandonment of the beliefs and practices to which this term formerly represented:

> Partially because of this negative press, even book publishers are abandoning the new age category for a series of 'more accurate labels like self-help, new science, metaphysics, Eastern religions, philosophy, natural living,' and so forth (meaning that the term has been dropped without abandoning any of the topics that were formerly marketed under the new age label) (Lewis 1992, p. 1).

So for the lack of an alternative I will retain use of the term New Age, keeping in mind that its usage is a point of contestation.

The New Age movement has many influences; however, in a broad sense it has been characterised as a tradition with a strong revivalist and millenarian outlook with a specific emphasis on 'Self-spirituality' and 'transformation'. It has absorbed aspects

from various traditions, those of particular influence being New Thought, Theosophy and Spiritualism, as well as certain beliefs drawn from Eastern and Native American religious traditions. Any exhaustive list of historical progenitors is, however, quite difficult to ascertain. This is not only due to the movement's eclecticism but also from the absence of any stringent conformity to the various beliefs and practices from which it drew its inspiration: "…[The New Age Movement] arose, not so much as a new religion, but as a new revivalist religious impulse directed toward the esoteric/metaphysical/Eastern groups and to the mystical strain in all religions" (Melton 1992, p. 18). Incidentally, it has been suggested that this informal and incomplete appropriation from various traditions, often assumed to be a sign of the triviality of the New Age movement, may not be a matter of carelessness; that it could rather be integral to the formation's use of the mechanism of the ideological Other. Regarding the influence of Hinduism on the New Age, Diem and Lewis note that what on the surface appear to be simple misinterpretations of the tradition, actually serve the tactical purpose of establishing an *idealized* image of the East to be counter-posed with the perceived deficiencies of the West, so that the latter can be judged from the framework of this ideal. The authors add that this same operation can be observed in many Enlightenment thinkers usage of the image of ancient Greece and Rome:

> In a manner parallel to the way in which the early New Age movement of the 1970s would later use the East, the Enlightenment thinkers used the West's own historical past – particularly the Greek and Roman period – as a background against which to criticize their own society. In their hands, the classical period became both a highly idealized reflection of their own aspirations and the very antithesis of everything they detested in eighteenth-century Europe (Diem & Lewis 1992, p. 51).

This, then, appears to be a reversal of the way in which the ideological figure of the Other is deployed in contemporary far-right politics: whereas the latter case uses the figure of the Other in an attempt to displace and thereby suppress the effects of internal antagonisms and inconsistencies, here the ideological Other itself stands for and thereby displaces the idea of social harmony and stability, and this may be presumed to imply a heightening of the effects of internal antagonisms and inconsistencies; it may be assumed from such a reading that ideological discourse should be neatly demarcated along the lines of its 'conservative' and 'progressive' usage. However, at least in this case, things are a little more complicated.

Perhaps one of the most commonly accepted ideas amongst the New Age movement is the notion of monism; there is a general aversion towards dualistic thinking, particularly the distinction between mind and matter. For the New Age proponents 'consciousness' is a primary and universal force, and it is possible for individuals to directly tap into this force provided they utilise the correct methods and practices. There is no one pathway towards this convergence, and the various methods and practices adopted by the New Age reflect not only its eclecticism but a belief that all spiritual pursuits, past and present, share this same fundamental goal; so this notion of 'raising consciousness' may be manifested in practices as diverse as meditation, 'channelling', natural diets, near-death experiences and out-of-the-body travel, contact with 'UFOs', forms of healing and alternative medicine, the use of crystals, past life regression, astrology; and so on (though again, no one New Age group would adhere to all New Age practices). Another important trait of New Age thinking is a rejection of the idea that spiritual transformation can be attained from an external source; rather any such transformation can only be a matter of 'inner experience':

> To experience the 'Self' itself is to experience 'God', the 'Goddess', the 'Source', 'Christ Consciousness', the 'inner child', the 'way of the heart', or, most simply and, I think, most frequently, 'inner spirituality'. And experiences of the 'Higher Self', to use another favoured term, stand in stark contrast to those afforded by the ego (Heelas 1996, p. 19).

The alleged proliferation of the 'ego' or 'lower self' in modern mainstream society and culture is attributed to various forms of 'social engineering' associated with the 'established order': "The mores of the established order – its materialism, competitiveness, together with the importance it attaches to playing roles – are held to disrupt what it is to be authentically human" (Heelas 1996, p. 18). The importance of an idealized image of the East is clear here, it works to demonstrate that the anxieties and insecurities one experiences are not *natural* states, as there are or at least were tangible societies devoid of these problems, societies constituted by individuals with 'higher' and more 'divine' levels of consciousness; so self-transformation is conceived as a clear and demonstrable possibility. Many proponents of New Age spirituality claim to have undergone just such a transformation; and from this it is said to follow that, given the steady rise of people awakening to their authentic nature, society as a whole will inevitably be transformed to reflect this state – hence the term 'New Age'.

It can be seen, then, that the New Age movement is to a certain extent a critique of modernity, that it inherits from the counterculture of the '60s its disdain for mainstream society and culture; however, the two movements differ widely in their relation to the hegemonic discourse. Whereas the counterculture confronted hegemonic power as a discourse of resistance and disengagement, manifested in its protest and commune movements, the New Age movement can be seen to engender a

semblance of stabilisation and much more closely fits the mould of ideology functioning as a supplement to discourse in general. The comparative violence and non-violence (in a broad sense), characteristic of the climate of the two movements, indicates that the counterculture is representative of a breakdown in hegemonic power (it has been noted that the open and excessive use of the repressive State apparatuses signifies a weak hold on State power and a lack of ideological cohesion), with the New Age pointing towards an end to this ideological struggle (evinced by its reintegration of hegemonic practices and emphasis on non-violence); I would argue that this is key to its relative longevity when compared with the counterculture. The fundamental break from the counterculture is in the movement's turn towards the individual, the pre-eminence afforded to 'Self' transformation. What follows from this is that changes to the structures of societal organisation are of secondary importance, the change that is necessary must come from 'within' and not from 'without', and so regardless of what station one occupies, it is still possible to conform to the New Age movement. This adaptability ensures that New Age principles can be applied rather indiscriminately to any and all aspects of one's life:

> …[W]e see a blending of different areas of life – business, personal, and spiritual – which would have been more compartmentalized in traditional religions (even in more traditional occult-metaphysical organizations). This tendency to blur the barriers between different areas of life (a tendency New Agers would view positively as 'holistic') is characteristic of New Age spirituality… (Lewis 1992, p. 4).

This tendency towards integration, Lewis goes on to note, is reflected in the organisation of New Age congregations, which usually dispense with the traditional 'ceremony' in favour of a refined approach to standardised 'workshops, lectures, and classes' (Lewis 1992, p. 8).

In terms of ideology critique, it does not follow that the New Age movement should be dismissed as ineffectual. Its historical development actually presents as a case of an ideology, initially functioning as a reaction against a dominant discourse, whose reabsorption into said discourse has the effect of strengthening it; it is an ideal example of the necessity of an ideological supplement to maintain an otherwise volatile hegemonic formation. The expediency of the New Age movement as an ideological supplement can be seen in a point made by Rupert who, writing in the early 1990's, notes that:

> Over the past decade GM, Lockheed, Scott Paper, and a host of other major corporations have paid for their personnel to attend seminars which, many critics argue, rely upon unconventional religious beliefs to maximise participants' productivity. The trend is undoubtedly significant; it has been estimated that American corporations collectively spend about $4 billion per year on New Age seminars (Rupert 1992, p. 128).

This enthusiastic reabsorption extended as far as the U.S. Army: "The slogan 'Be All You Can Be' is a direct result of a commission established to explore the possibility of creating a 'New Age Army'" (Rupert 1992, p. 127). The unlikely pairing of New Age spirituality with a military apparatus demonstrates just how wide the gap can be between the content and the form of an ideological discourse. In this regard Marx may be quite correct in his suspicion, expressed in *The German Ideology*, that those who consider themselves to be engaged in "…'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, morality, etc." (1976, p. 50), may, in certain circumstances, inadvertently function as prototypical 'ideologists', the unwitting apologists for hegemonic discourse.

I maintain that the commonalities established between the three ideological formations examined above, chosen with specific regard for their diversity,

demonstrate both the pervasive nature of ideology as well as the possibility of analysing and critiquing ideology in all of its manifold manifestations. Ideology is everywhere but not everywhere the same; the material circumstances engendered by it can differ greatly, and so the establishment of tools capable of the valuation and critique of ideology are not only possible but, I would argue, necessary. It is to this end that a refined theory of ideology is of such importance.

Conclusion

I began by situating the problem of ideology within the broader context of the metaphysical problem of the relation between mind and matter; this was necessary insofar as ideology has commonly been conceived as being a false representation or mystification of the real world, and so it appeared to follow that its existence would have to entail the possibility of an undistorted, or authentic, consciousness to be contrasted with it. The philosophy of Hegel served as the starting point primarily because in its innovative conception of the processes of alienation and reconciliation it is able to move beyond this problematic and provide a plausible foundation for the theory of ideology. Hegel is also essential given that the early philosophy of Marx, from which the traditional theory of ideology was developed, can be read as a Hegelian critique of Hegel.

Of most importance to the theory of ideology was the Hegelian conception of alienation, which can be conceived both positively and negatively. Alienation as estrangement (Entfremdung) was defined as a state or process whereby one's consciousness is separated from one or more of the necessary aspects required for authentic self-understanding; it is thus the foundation for what in Marx becomes ideological consciousness. Alienation as externalisation (Entäusserung) was defined as a process whereby consciousness externalises itself in object form, and in doing so is able to develop a greater understanding of itself; in Hegel this is represented by the activity of disciplined work, the shaping of material objects in conformity with one's own rational plan. For Marx this latter form of alienation is not possible given the conditions of alienated labour, conditions that he argues are sustained by the discourse

of ideology; thus for Marx the problem of ideology is inextricably linked to material practices.

Hegel argued that for the development of self-consciousness four fundamental requirements, all of which being interdependent, are necessary: the experience of freedom or autonomy, the mutual recognition of this status from subject to subject, the disciplined work described above and a fear of death which is perhaps best understood as a proper understanding of our status as a finite manifestation of the universal. Importantly, Hegel maintained that these conditions cannot be met in isolation, rather they can only be achieved as the outcome of the establishment of a free and rational society, from which it can be inferred that prior to this stage all perspectives could be considered partial at best, and so in the broadest sense ideological. This is an assumption shared by Marx in his conception of ideology, which explains his insistence that ideology is primarily a matter related to societal organisation. Insofar as ideology remains connected to the question of the extent to which our knowledge is socially conditioned, it is an enduring assumption.

The work of Feuerbach is of critical importance not just as a bridge between the thought of Hegel and Marx, but as a significant progenitor to the once popular notion that ideology should be read as a form of false consciousness. Elaborating on Hegel's notion of a divided subject, exemplified by the figure of the 'unhappy consciousness' in the *Phenomenology*, Feuerbach outlines a state in which one forms an over-identification with the inessential (changeable, finite) aspects of being with a concurrent dissociation from being's essential (unchangeable, infinite) aspects. For Feuerbach this is a problem because he argues that what we perceive to be our

inessential aspects are themselves always and only finite manifestations of the universal, essential, categories of Reason, Will and Heart. Thus the division between the two has the effect of dissociating oneself from one's 'essential self'. The problem with religion, as Feuerbach sees it, is that it involves a transformation of this conceptual distinction into an ontological division with the deification of human ideals, or ideal traits; so it represents a potent form of alienation as estrangement. I argued that a distorted ontological shift of this nature would have to occur if the definition of ideology as false consciousness was to be viable, however ultimately it was found to be untenable.

Marx's notion of ideology incorporates and expands upon Feuerbach's reading of religion as anthropomorphic self-alienation. It is in Marx that the traditional conception of ideology is firmly established, however, it is also the case that Marx introduces a level of ambiguity to the concept insofar as he alternates between an epistemological and a political understanding of the term, with the two leading to seemingly incompatible consequences. Marx accepts the preeminent role played by self-alienation in the works of Hegel and Feuerbach; however, he diverges from them by denying that this state is a necessary or intrinsic stage in the development of self-consciousness per se. Marx argues that Hegel and Feuerbach arrive at their conclusions by the use of an 'upside-down' procedure whereby human essence is first established as something given, and society is then conceived of as being a reflection of this essence; imperfect societies are then interpreted as a reflection of imperfect or under-developed essence. For Marx, the human essence is no more and no less than the ensemble of social relationships in a given society; it follows that if a society is conducive to the production of self-alienated subjects, then it is the organisation of

that society which is underdeveloped and thus prone to radical transformation. The religious feeling described by Feuerbach is thus not a universal stage in the development of self-understanding, but a reaction to specific social conditions. For Marx it becomes an exemplary model of ideology functioning to mask concrete conditions of alienation.

I argued that, although there is no clear rupture or 'epistemological break' demarcating Marx's early and later treatment on the subject, there is a definite tension between two quite disparate notions of ideology adhering throughout his work. The first approach is a conception of ideology that is essentially epistemological, the 'illusion' model of ideology. Here Marx correlates the division of labour with an emergence of the idea that theoretical ideas are fundamentally autonomous, they are thoroughly dissociated from their conditions of possibility. This leads to a commonly held assumption that such ideas are universal, an ideological conception for Marx as he maintains that such ideas are ultimately the mystified expression of, in this case exploitative, economic conditions. I argued that this formulation creates an immediate problem with regards to the purpose or value of unmasking ideology; it seems to follow from the epistemological approach that one is left with the choice of living with the naïve illusion of self-determined universal ideas, or the acceptance that our thoughts are simply representations of a material life-process beyond our direct control. Neither option offers hope of affective change, and the exercise of ideology critique would appear to be a superfluous endeavour. The determinism implicit in such an approach also appears to contradict the 'purposive' or 'intentional' nature of human consciousness stressed by Marx. The other approach, a political or functional conception of ideology, appears to restore a sense of agency to the subject; however,

it is not without its own problems. Here ideology is conceived in the manner of a conscious or intentional political tool, it is not dissociated from and ineffectual towards material activity, but rather the latter's guiding force – a collection of ideas systematically designed to maintain the status quo of exploitative relations of production. The immediate difficulty here is that it is unclear how the process evolves whereby some individuals are ideological and others practice ideology, it would seem to entail an implausible distinction between the consciousness of the 'ruling class' and the 'ruled' – a notion that is hinted at but underdeveloped.

Both approaches imply a 'misrepresentation' of the 'actual' state of affairs. They differ in that the epistemic approach views material activity as determining consciousness, and the political approach views consciousness as determining material activity. In a sense, then, the inconsistency could simply stem from the difficulty in developing a theory of ideology from a conceptual foundation of the inter-dependence of thought and action. I have argued that this is not necessarily contradictory, that depending on its socio-historical circumstances a society could be in thrall to one or the other forms of ideology; the epistemic model would then represent a state in which ideological influence is especially strong, meaning the tensions within the material base are effectively masked; and in a less stable, conflictive environment, the political model would be operative, presumably with the intent of affecting its stronger variant. This reading may help to resolve the apparent incompatibility of the two approaches, but it leaves the problems internal to each untouched; and so it is clear that Marx's work on ideology is in need of development.

The investigation inevitably leads back to the initial problem in that the forms of ideology established still seem to require some sort of standard of truth to be juxtaposed with them. Marx is not so convincing here, contrasting ideology with 'that which can be determined with the precision of natural science' and simply assuming that the scientific method is free of ideological influence. Without a solid epistemic foundation it can only follow that the theory of ideology is itself vulnerable to ideology critique, it turns back in on itself. The consequence of this is quite drastic: it appears to follow that the options left are to either assume that the theory of ideology is invalid or to assume that *all* thought is to a certain extent ideological. Arguing that there is still much of value in Marx's theory, I tentatively opted for the latter. The objective then is to attempt to unpack the Marxian theory of ideology, using a similar method to that used by Marx in his critique of the 'ideologists', in order to ascertain whether a distinction can be made between the ideology behind the theory of ideology, and those aspects of the theory which could be retained.

Despite being in some respects a critique of Hegel and Feuerbach, Marx's notion of ideology retains and makes use of the conceptual framework adopted by his predecessors: I have argued that all three conceive of history as being a teleological process of transformation; a process whereby consciousness or human nature progresses from a state of alienation, through various forms of what could be called ideology, and develops towards a state of authenticity, as yet unreached. A conception of authenticity as being a state in which one is 'at home' in and not distinct from society at large is a shared assumption, however they differ in their views on how this will come about: for Hegel it will emerge as a consequence of an organic state, an organisation that arises naturally from a properly philosophic understanding of

absolute spirit; for Feuerbach authenticity becomes possible after the development of a more self-sufficient form of humanism, one free of religious mystification; and for Marx it is represented by the coming of a classless society free of exploitation. All three identify the history of human societies as a fundamentally progressive development. Within this schema, ideology is to be conceived as that force from which this necessary advancement is – temporarily – hindered, stifled or regressed. An ideological presupposition behind this theory of ideology, then, is the existence of some sort of collective subject embodied in the historical process; a subject who is conceived to be both rational and purposive, and yet one who moves beyond the immediate comprehension of the individual subjects of whom it is composed. This ideological presupposition is responsible for another seemingly insurmountable division analogous to that of ideology and a standard of truth: a division between the individual subject and the, arguably reified, conceptions of *Geist*, *species being*, and *collective social labour*.

This teleological motif is not unique to Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx; it can rather be seen to reflect the culturally dominant idea of necessary progress proliferating at the time. It is no coincidence that the bulk of literature under review was composed between 1789 and 1848, a period defined as the 'age of revolution' by Eric Hobsbawm, and it is not surprising if the theoretical transformations described were perceived to be consistent with, or substantiated by, the material transformations taking place. Hegel was writing of the perfectibility of the state at the close of a period that witnessed the apparent potential for Enlightenment ideals to become actual with the example of the French revolution; as well as the subsequent and unprecedented drive towards the modernisation of states manifested in the far-

reaching Napoleonic reforms implemented in the French-occupied areas of the Holy Roman Empire. Feuerbach's arguments for the infinite potentialities for the advancement of humanity could, likewise, have only been reinforced by the unforeseeable limits of the scientific and technological advancements emanating from the industrial revolution in Britain. Needless to say the necessity of progress and the inherent value in the mastery of natural forces was a motif enthusiastically adopted by Marx in his theory of ideology. The assumption that this teleological tendency is empirically verifiable is then of critical importance, insofar as this belief potentially masks or disassociates itself from its theoretical foundations, foundations which may be dubious or unwarranted. This is the argument advanced by Rosen, that implicit in Marx's theory of ideology are certain unsubstantiated claims derived from the traditions of rationalism and providentialism.

Rosen's argument is significant in that it questions not just the validity of the theory of ideology, but the very problems presupposed by it. For instance, he asks on what basis does Marx equate the end of ideology with the emergence of fully autonomous and rational individuals. The origin of this valuation is not questioned by Marx, and Rosen traces it back to Plato on the one hand, and St Augustine on the other; both of whom espoused the primacy of reason over desire, stressing that reason is distinct from, superior to and in constant tension with the passions, such that for the former to develop authentically, the latter must be curtailed. Desire as an 'alien force' separate from what is essentially human has clear parallels with the notion that a society based upon the production of commodities is an 'alien force'. However, these distinctions between reason and desire, and autonomy and alienation, need to be rethought. As Nietzsche would argue, the valuation that reason is preeminent is itself reflective of a

desire, a desire for certainty; and the same could hold for the pre-eminence of autonomy, which could simply be reflective of an aversion to alienation. It follows that the objective of ideology critique needs to be refined, that the ideal of an 'autonomous subject' to be opposed with an 'ideological subject' needs to be discarded; it is to this end that the turn towards an aesthetic/psychoanalytic understanding of ideology works to advance the theory. Rosen identifies aspects of providentialism in the theory in the assumption that societies can be conceived as organic systems that are able to maintain themselves in ways that cannot be directly understood from the perspective of the individual subject. This is exemplified in Marx's notion of a more or less autonomous 'economic base' that is able to produce the most suitable 'ideological superstructure'. Rosen is able demonstrate that this way of thinking descends from the idea that individual actions should be viewed as being the realisation of a Divine Will, and like its source, lacks a sufficient justification. It is in order to remove this influence, and other instances of economic reductionism, that I argue that the theory of ideology should rather be applied to Foucault's conception of societies as being dynamic networks of power/knowledge, of which it is much more compatible. My response to the two 'background beliefs' highlighted by Rosen does have the implication that a slightly different approach should be taken to the analysis of ideological consciousness, or the way in which ideology is experienced by the individual subject, on the one hand, and the function of ideological discourse on a societal level, on the other; given that these phenomena are relatively distinct I do not believe this to be problematic. Refined in this manner, I have argued that the theory of ideology remains one of the best-equipped tools for the analysis of alienation, non-rational belief and the unity of culture.

An aesthetic conception of ideology has the immediate benefit of radically altering the approach to which one can take towards three of the most problematic presuppositions contained in the traditional theory of ideology: the nature of the 'ideological subject'; the apparently necessary positing of a 'collective subject', mystified or falsely represented by ideology; and a 'standard of truth' from which ideology can be evaluated. The aesthetic approach makes use of the notion of 'hailing' utilised by Althusser in his theory of ideological interpellation. There is no longer a clear distinction to be made between 'ideological' and 'authentic' consciousness, as ideology can be conceived to be operational everywhere and experienced, to a certain extent, by everyone. The problem of non-falsifiability implicit in a ubiquitous conception of ideology can be avoided with the important caveat that ideological interpellation is never total, as no ideology is self-sufficient. The measure of ideological interpellation is analogous to that of judgments of taste, it is the extent to which one perceives their subjective 'lived experiences' reflected in the (ideological) object, or rather the extent to which they recognise themselves as the intended subject of the (ideological) object. Ideology does not so much 'determine' individuals, then, but can rather be seen as a discourse that is utilised, whether consciously or unconsciously, in order to ameliorate the effects of a sense of alienation. The growth of an ideological formation is likewise explicable in an aesthetic sense, as the extent to which an ideological judgment forms a consensus is proportionate to the extent to which that judgment is able to conceal its emotional/performative foundation and function, and be presented as an 'obvious', 'disinterested' and 'universal' observation.

This refined approach, inaugurated by Eagleton, has the advantage of explicating the nature of the 'collective subject' implied by ideology when combined with the work of Žižek. If the object of ideology is conceived along the same lines as that which works to fashion a 'sensus communis' in Kant, a sense of 'intersubjectivity', then the ontological status of this object is best identified with that of fantasy. The collective subject has been epitomised in the notion of an organic or harmonious society, a projection arising from, and to the extent to which individuals identify with it on an aesthetic level, covering up, inherent inconsistencies and antagonisms of the social/symbolic order. It is a projection then, the need for which would grow in proportion to the extent to which a society tends towards the atomisation of its subjects; on the other hand, however, this ideological fantasy can hardly be sustained in conjunction with concrete instances of antagonism, atomisation and alienation. This is why the ideological fantasy of the 'beautiful' society must always be supplemented with a 'sublime' Other, a figure on to whom the sources of the various inconsistencies and antagonisms are displaced. The sublime Other can thus be read as a manifestation of the unconscious desire of the subject; a figure who is able to sustain the affectivity of the 'beautiful' (ideological) object, despite its non-existence, in the imagination: for the Other is conceived to be that which prevents the fruition of the ideological object, or is conceived to embody or possess the object; or a mixture of both. Such a reading sheds a light on the reason why a 'collective subject', a notion intricately entangled with ideology, has been so hard to define: for, as Žižek demonstrates, it is a 'subject' completely devoid of any positive ontological consistency, a 'spectral' or 'virtual' entity comprised of the myriad antagonisms in a social body, thus an entity whose constitutive make-up is invariably contradictory. The amorphous and indeterminate nature of this collective subject does not, however,

lessen its practical efficacy – another important contribution to the theory of ideology made by Žižek is his insistence on an expansion of the traditional Marxist conception of materialism, so as to include the immanent materiality of the ideal order itself; the collective subject serves the functional role of maintaining a status quo, or ensuring the reproduction of the relations of production, by externalising the causes of antagonisms internal to a social structure, by re-signifying them as instances of corruption contingent to the structure itself. It is in this sense that ideological discourse can be distinguished from discourse in general in Foucault: whereas the latter evolves through constant adaptation, ideological discourse functions by assuming the semblance of stabilisation and constancy.

A third advantage of the aesthetic/psychoanalytic approach is that it does away with the need for a standard of truth to make sense of ideology. There is a general shift from an epistemological to an affective understanding of the concept; as Eagleton notes, whether a proposition is empirically true or false is irrelevant to whether the proposition can be said to be ideological. The 'unmasking' relevant to ideology critique is not concerned with a transformation from 'false' to 'authentic' consciousness, rather one seeks to identify the emotional and performative aspects implicit in a given proposition, to determine what sort of social configurations are promoted or denigrated by a discourse that may well be presented ostensibly as being neutral.

The final problem to be addressed is the need for a replacement of the base/superstructure model as an explanation for the functional role of ideology, as this model has been shown to be reductive and unable to account for ideology in all of its

forms. It is to this end that the work of Foucault is essential for the development of the concept. The conception of power implicit in the traditional theory of ideology contains the same binary opposition of struggle/repression that was deconstructed and discarded by Foucault; I have argued that the refined approach to ideology outlined above is much more compatible with and actually enhanced by the *relational* conception of power advocated by Foucault. The traditional theory of ideology saw the role of power in the hostile engagement of forces manifested in class struggle, the result of this struggle being the establishment of an ideological superstructure, one of whose functions being the repression of those interests at odds with that of the dominant class or classes; the primary determinate of this power as domination/subjugation is the economy, with the incommensurability of the economic base and the relations of production secured by the superstructure leading to the resumption of struggle. There are two significant flaws in this conception: firstly, it only encapsulates the negative aspects of power, the instances in which power is manifested as domination, subjugation and repression; this limited perspective leads necessarily to the goal of the gradual abolition of State power. However, Foucault notes that this 'repressive hypothesis' fails to account for power in all of its manifold and pervasive functions. Using the example of the 'deployment of sexuality' Foucault is able to demonstrate that dominant forms of power are not primarily concerned with repression, although repression and forms of control are certainly very real effects of power, but with creative forms of actualisation or even sublimation (in Hegelian terminology, with authentic or *actual* self-externalisation/objectification); in this case, the development of a new social identity. The other flaw pertains to the tendency in the traditional theory of ideology to treat of power as a *possession*, as something that needs to be *seized*. Foucault demonstrates that such a seizure is never possible, that

power needs to be understood within the proper context of a dynamic network comprised of a multiplicity of force relations, as something that quite literally functions everywhere in a constant process of circulation. In this context, it is wrong to conceive of individuals as being simply acted on or determined by forms of power, they are rather always in a situation in which they are simultaneously exercising forms of power as well as being acted on by forms of power. What becomes lost with the adoption of the base/superstructure model is thus the important insight, recognised by Hegel in the master/slave dialectic, that hegemonic power (or a hegemonic ideology) cannot function autonomously, that it must necessarily enter into or engender relations of recognition, acquiescence or resistance, all of which being forms of power as well.

I have argued that the functional role of ideology can be situated within the context of Foucault's vision of societies structured by the workings of power exercised through apparatuses of knowledge, or discourse; as essentially being a reaction against the general tendency of discourse towards constant evolution and adaptation. Ideological discourse, in contrast to discourse in general, utilises a semblance of stabilisation and constancy in order to gain momentum; it is thus in the breakdown of hegemonic power, in the re-emergence of localised conflicts, that ideological formations are most active – they work as a supplement to discourse, effecting an ostensible equilibrium in an otherwise volatile environment. Ideological discourse is both the most potent form of discourse, insofar as it relates to individuals on an aesthetic/psychological level, as well as being one of the most vulnerable forms of discourse – as its potency lies in the promise of some form of social harmony and stability, and thus it must eschew from any radical transformation dictated by the dynamic and ever-shifting relations of

power/knowledge; and so for ideology to sustain itself, it must make constant use of such mechanisms as cynical distance, the figure of the Other, repressed enjoyment, and so on. It is apt that Christianity and its connection to the messianic tradition has been a prominent feature of this study, both as an influence on the progenitors of the traditional theory of ideology, and a pertinent case study for a refined conception of ideology; as it can be argued that there is a messianic tendency in all ideological formations, a propensity towards the presentation of a *deliverance from alienation* – a genuine reconciliation between subject and object.

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